

# MAKE NO MISTAKE, CANCER IS A SCARY THING

Written by Dr. Pasha, Published by *The Auroran*



Dr. Pasha shares his knowledge and experience through published articles

DR. Pasha

Each year it kills thousands of Canadians and drastically alters the lives of survivors. As a dentist I encounter cancer mostly in the mouth in the form of various oral cancers; it's an unfortunate part of my job. Oral cancers are common among Canadians, and while serious, are also among the more preventable. Around 75 percent of oral cancers are linked to modifiable behaviours like tobacco use and excessive alcohol consumption.

## Origins

Oral cancers originate in the tissues of the mouth, though they can also appear through metastasis (when cancer spreads between two areas of the body that aren't directly connected). We identify oral cancers as painful lesions, often on the border of the tongue or the floor of the mouth, as well as on the lips, salivary glands and at the back of the throat.

Remember that everyone gets sores in their mouths from time to time, so it's important not to panic if you find an ulcer in your mouth. However, if a lesion doesn't heal after 14 days you should visit your dental professional for an evaluation.

## Causes

Obvious causes of oral cancer include smoking cigarettes, cigars and pipes, as well as chewing tobacco. This risk comes down to more than 50 known carcinogens lurking in commercially available tobacco products. Studies in populations with alcohol abuse problems also correlate heavy alcohol use with different oral cancers, particularly if smoking is present.

In different parts of the world, chewing substances like betel carries a strong risk of developing oral cancer. In India, where the practice is common, oral cancer represents roughly 40 percent of all cancers.

Men are close to two times more likely than women to contract oral cancer. While the risk is greater after the age of 40, I've started to see cases occur in younger people.

## Prevention

I recommend the same preventative measures to combat oral cancer that I advocate for protecting against gum disease and tooth decay:

- 1) brush and floss your teeth daily; and
- 2) see your dental professional regularly.

These methods are table stakes for good oral health.

If you identify yourself as being in an at risk category, I recommend the following:

- **If you're a smoker, stop**
- **If you drink heavily, consider reducing your consumption or quitting**
- **Consider a diet rich in fruits and vegetables**

If you have any questions about oral cancer, the risks involved or how to prevent it, please get in touch with me at [drpasha@wellingtonauroradental.com](mailto:drpasha@wellingtonauroradental.com).

## Sources:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/oral-bucco/disease-maladie/cancer-eng.php> <http://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-type/oral/signs-and-symptoms/?region=on>