

Warning Signs of Oral Cancer



(a) white patches of the oral tissues – leukoplakia



(b) red and white patches – erythroleukoplakia



(c) and (d) an abnormal lump or thickening of the tissues of the mouth.



(e) a mass or lump in the neck.

Perform a Self-Exam Monthly

Using a bright light and a mirror:

- ◆ remove any dentures
- ◆ look and feel inside the lips and the front of gums
- ◆ tilt head back to inspect and feel the roof of your mouth
- ◆ pull the cheek out to see its inside surface as well as the back of the gums
- ◆ pull out your tongue and look at all of its surfaces
- ◆ feel for lumps or enlarged lymph nodes (glands) in both sides of the neck including under the lower jaw

Look for:

- ◆ white patches, called leukoplakia (figure a)
- ◆ red patches (erythroplakia)
- ◆ red and white patches (erythroleukoplakia (figure b)
- ◆ sore(s) that fails to heal and bleeds easily
- ◆ abnormal lumps or thickening of the tissues (figures c and d)
- ◆ chronic sore throat or hoarseness
- ◆ difficulty in chewing or swallowing
- ◆ a mass or lump in the neck (figure e)

See your oral and maxillofacial surgeon right away if you have any of these signs.

A Word About Oral Care

When it comes to your health, your mouth is one of your body's most important early warning systems. Don't ignore any suspicious lumps or sores. If you discover something, don't panic. Make an appointment for a prompt examination. Early treatment may well be the key to complete recovery.



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Oral and maxillofacial surgeons are an important link in the referral network for primary care providers. To find an oral and maxillofacial surgeon in your community, visit the "Find a Surgeon" database at aaoms.org, or call the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons at 800/822-6637.