

Oral cancers are amongst the top ten most common cancers found in both males and females in Pakistan.

What is oral cancer?

Oral cancers are found either in the oral cavity, which is the area of the mouth, or the oropharynx, which is the part of the throat at the back of the mouth. The lips, lining of cheeks, salivary glands, roof and back of mouth, and the area under the tongue, are all parts of the oral cavity and oropharynx.

Oral cancer can develop in any part of the oral cavity or oropharynx, mostly beginning in the tongue and floor of the mouth.

What are the symptoms associated with oral cancer?

The most common symptoms of oral cancer include a lip or mouth sore that does not heal, a white or red patch on the gums, mouth or lining of the mouth, a lump on the lip, in the mouth or throat, unusual bleeding, pain or numbness in mouth area, swelling of the jaw, pain in the ear, a change in voice, a chronic sore throat, feeling that something is caught in the throat, and difficulty or pain when swallowing or chewing.

While at most times these symptoms are not due to cancer, if you are experiencing any of these symptoms you should schedule an appointment with see your doctor or dentist to diagnose the problem and have it treated as early as possible.

What are the risk factors of oral cancer?

While the exact cause of oral cancer is unknown, some major risk factors include:

- 1 Tobacco** – The excessive use of cigarettes, cigars, pipe, *hookah* and *sheesha* as well as smokeless tobacco such as *naswar* is one of the most common causes of oral cancer.
- 2 Betel leaf (paan) and betel nuts** – The use of betel leaf (*paan*), especially some of the spices used within them such as *katha* and *choona*, can lead to oral cancer.
- 3 Alcohol abuse** – If you consume a lot of alcoholic beverages, you can increase your risk of developing oral cancer.
- 4 Diet** – Some studies suggest that not eating enough fruits and vegetables may increase incidence.

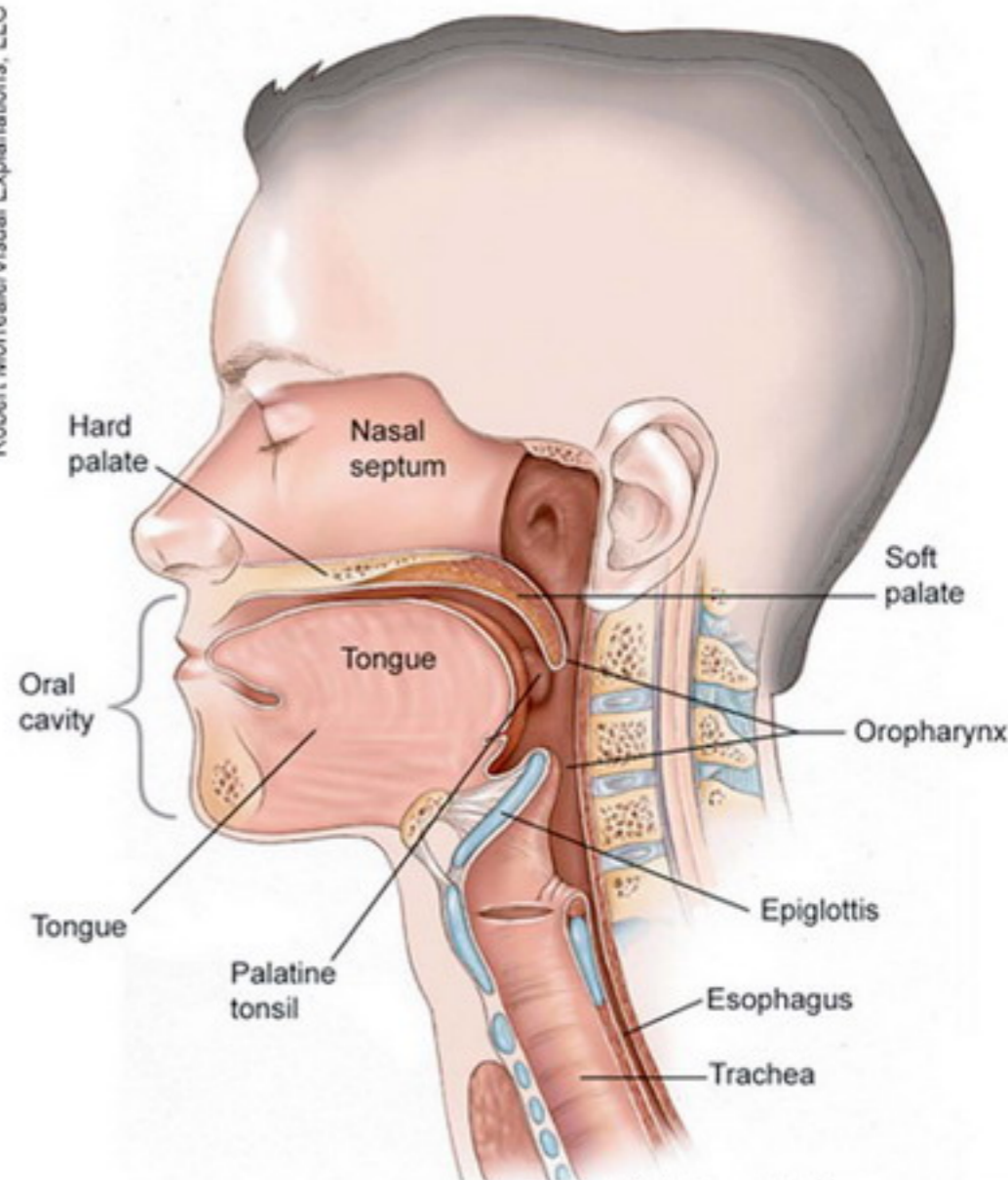
What tests will I have to take to detect oral cancer?

Your doctor will conduct a physical exam first, checking your mouth and throat regions for symptoms associated with oral cancer. The

doctor may remove a small sample of tissue from the affected area to examine under a microscope to check for cancer cells.

Your doctor may also order a chest x-ray, dental x-ray, CT scan or MRI to check the extent to which the cancer has spread.

Robert Morreale/Visual Explanations, LLC



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What is the treatment for this type of cancer?

Early detection of cancer is extremely important, leading to better treatment options and a higher cure rate. There are many types of treatment options for oral cancer.

Surgery is the most common option, which is used to remove the tumour from the mouth and additionally, lymph nodes from the neck.

Both types of radiation therapy, internal and external are also used, using high-energy radiation rays to destroy cancer cells. In internal radiation, radioactive material is placed into the tissue via needles, seeds or thin plastic tubes while in external radiation a machine is used as the source of radiation.

Chemotherapy, using anti-cancer drugs to eliminate cancer cells, is another option to treat oral cancers.

What can I do to prevent oral cancer?

Make sure you get yearly dental check-up from your dentist. Avoid smoking or using tobacco products. Avoid eating betel leaf or *paan*. Stop drinking alcoholic beverages. Consume a healthy diet, rich in fruits and vegetables while limiting the amount of red meat intake. Again, do not forget to talk to your physician if you experience any of the risk factors associated with this type of cancer.

NOTES

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INFORMATION ON ORAL CANCER

