Kenya Dental Association

KDA

# MOUTH CANCER

## Know the Signs, Prevent the Risk, Save a Life

## What is Mouth Cancer?

**Mouth cancer**, also known as ***oral cancer***, is a cancer that develops in the tissues of the mouth. It can affect the tongue, lips, gums, inner cheeks, floor of the mouth and other oral tissues.

It occurs when abnormal cells grow uncontrollably and may spread to other parts of the body if not detected early.



## Common Signs and Symptoms

1. Mouth ulcers that do not heal within two weeks.
2. White or red patches inside the mouth.
3. Unexplained lumps or swellings in the mouth or neck.
4. Persistent pain in the mouth or tongue.
5. Difficulty chewing, swallowing or speaking.
6. Unexplained bleeding in the mouth.
7. Persistent numbness of the tongue or lips.
8. Difficulty moving the tongue or jaw.
9. Unexplained loosening of teeth.
10. Persistent hoarseness or a sore throat.

***These symptoms do not automatically mean cancer, but they require professional assessment.***

## What Causes Mouth Cancer?

***Major risk factors include:***

- Tobacco use, including cigarettes, cigars and smokeless tobacco.
- Excessive alcohol consumption.
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV), particularly HPV-16.
- Prolonged exposure of the lips to ultraviolet sunlight.
- Increasing age.
- Poor nutrition and diets low in fruits and vegetables.
- Previous history of oral cancer.

## How Can Mouth Cancer Be Prevented?

- Avoid tobacco in all its forms.
- Limit or avoid alcohol consumption.
- Maintain a healthy, balanced diet.
- Practise good oral hygiene.
- Protect your lips from excessive sunlight.
- Consider HPV vaccination in line with national recommendations.
- Attend regular dental examinations.
- Seek professional assessment of any suspicious lesion.

## Why is Early Detection Important?

***Early detection significantly improves treatment outcomes and survival prospects.***

### Treatment may involve:

- Surgery.
- Radiotherapy.
- Chemotherapy.
- Targeted therapy or immunotherapy (in selected cases).
- Rehabilitation and supportive dental care.

***A dentist can perform an oral cancer screening by examining the lips, tongue, gums, cheeks and other oral tissues.***

### What Should You Do If You Notice a Suspicious Lesion?

Do not ignore it or attempt to treat it with home remedies. Seek assessment from a qualified dentist, oral and maxillofacial surgeon or a medical specialist. A biopsy may be needed.

## YOUR MOUTH CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE. CHECK IT!

**LOOK** for unusual changes in your mouth.

**SCREEN** regularly with a dental professional.

**ACT EARLY** when you notice suspicious signs.

**EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES!**

A HEALTHY MOUTH • A HEALTHY YOU • A HEALTHIER KENYA