

## Did You Know?

According to the 2001 *Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health in America*, oral cancer is the 6th most common cancer in US males, making it a major public health issue. An estimated 30,200 new oral cancer cases will be diagnosed this year.



- Although the percentage of deaths has been decreasing since 1980, nearly 8,000 Americans die annually from oral cancer.
- Smoking in combination with heavy alcohol consumption (30+ drinks/week) is the primary risk factor for oral cancer.
- Oral cancer is more likely to strike after the age of 40.
- Additional risk factors that may be linked to oral cancer include: smokeless tobacco use; regular, prolonged exposure to the sun (lip cancer).
- Studies suggest that a diet high in fruits and vegetables may prevent the development of potentially cancerous lesions.
- Oral cancer can affect any area of the oral cavity including the lips, gum tissues, cheek lining, tongue, and the hard or soft palate.
- Symptoms of oral cancer include:
  - a sore that bleeds easily or does not heal
  - a color change of the oral tissues
  - a lump, thickening, rough spot, crust or small eroded area
  - pain, tenderness, or numbness anywhere in the mouth or on the lips
  - difficulty chewing, swallowing, speaking, or moving the jaw or tongue
  - a change in the way the teeth fit together
- Regular visits to the dentist can increase the chance of early detection, which can improve the potential for successful treatment.

### **How can I help prevent oral cancer?**

Eliminate any risk factors such as tobacco and alcohol and regularly visit our office for your scheduled re-care visit. At that time both Melissa and I will check your mouth for any potential signs of pre-cancerous or potentially cancerous lesions. Periodic dental exams allow early detection and appropriate treatment if cancer develops. If at any time you notice any of the following changes in the appearance of your mouth or any of these signs and symptoms, contact our office:

- A persistent sore or irritation that does not heal for a week or more.
- Color changes such as the development of red and/or white lesions.
- Pain, tenderness or numbness anywhere in the mouth or lips.
- A lump, thickening, rough spot, crust or small eroded area.
- Difficulty in chewing, swallowing, speaking or moving the jaw or tongue
- Substantial change in bite with unknown origin such as a new filling or crown.

*Your dental team,*

***Cary, Joanne, Barbara, Melissa, Cassandra, Dean and Michelle***