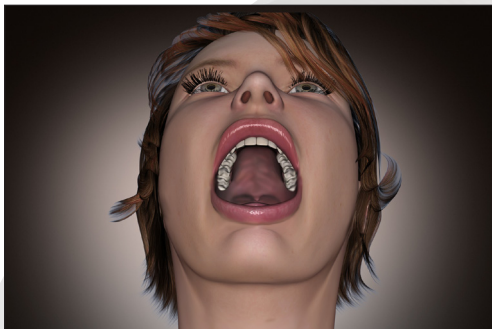


- 6. Examine the roof of your mouth by tilting your head back again and saying “ah.”** Look for unusual growths, red spots or white patches.



- 7. Examine your tongue by grasping the end of it with gauze or a washcloth. Then gently pull your tongue forward, right and left, and touch the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth.**

A popsicle stick or the handle of a spoon can aid in retracting tissues in hard-to-see places. This will make it easy to see each surface of the tongue. Look for ulcers, red spots or white patches.



- 8. While touching the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth, check the floor of the mouth and underneath your tongue.** Use your forefinger to palpate for lumps, and look for suspicious lesions.



The most common areas for oral cancer are the sides of the tongue and underneath the tongue on the floor of the mouth.

**If you find a lesion or a swelling in your mouth or throat that does not go away after 7-14 days, see your dentist. He or she will examine your mouth and decide whether a biopsy or other test should be performed.**

**Oral-Systemic Health Education**  
for Non-Dental Healthcare Providers

An Initiative of the International Centre for  
Oral-Systemic Health at the Faculty of Dentistry  
in Collaboration with the Faculty of Medicine



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This information is not intended to replace a doctor's examination for oral or oropharyngeal cancer or your doctor's advice.

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# Performing An Oral Cancer Self-Exam: Step-by-Step Instructions



To view a video demonstration on how to perform an oral self-examination, go to [www.oralhealthed.com](http://www.oralhealthed.com).

Oral cancer is the thirteenth-most common form of cancer in Canada, and death rates from oral cancer are higher than for many other cancers, including cervical, liver and stomach. Although this type of cancer occurs more frequently in people who smoke, and in older adults, it can also occur in those who have no known risk factors for the disease.

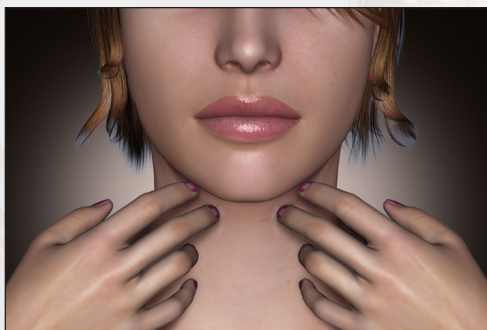
**The good news is that oral cancer can be successfully treated if it is caught early.** The following self-examination guide can help you identify the possible symptoms of oral cancer including ulcers; red spots or white patches; thin grey or white plaques; lumps on the lips, tongue or neck; bright-red patches with a soft, velvety texture; a sore throat or difficulty swallowing; and inflamed or bleeding tissues.

**1. Stand in front of a mirror, and look at your head and neck.**

While tilting your head back, look for swelling or masses around the neck.



**2. Lower your chin to return your head to the upright position.** Feel both sides of your neck and under your jaw. There are many lymph nodes in this area, and sometimes they will feel enlarged. Enlarged lymph nodes are associated with many non-threatening illnesses including the common cold. So if your lymph nodes feel enlarged, it is not necessarily a reason to be worried.



**3. After washing your hands, use your thumbs and both forefingers to palpate (press and feel) the inside and outside of your lips, to see if there is swelling or masses.**

At the same time, look for any changes in colour, ulcers or crusted tissue on your lips or the mucous membranes lining the inside of the lips.



**4. Pull your lips away from your gums and examine the gum tissue for ulcers, red spots or white patches.** Inflamed and bleeding gums are signs of gum disease.



**5. Use your thumbs and both forefingers to pull your cheeks away from your teeth and palpate the inside and outside surfaces of the cheeks, feeling for rough surfaces, swelling or masses.** You should also look for changes in colour, including red spots or white patches, and ulcers on the tissue lining the inside of the cheek.

