



If you have any concerns about cancer you can talk to one of our specialist nurses on the Cancer Focus NI **FREE** information and support Nurse Line.

**0800 783 3339**

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am - 1pm.  
Calls are **free** and **confidential** from a landline.  
[nurseline@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:nurseline@cancerfocusni.org)



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Charity No: NIC 101307



**The symptoms outlined in this leaflet are often caused by something less serious and doesn't usually mean it's cancer. However, finding cancer early makes it more treatable and a trip to your dentist or doctor could save your life. If in doubt, get it checked out. If it's not serious, your mind will be put at rest. You certainly won't be wasting anyone's time.**

**Dentists are trained to spot early signs of mouth and salivary gland cancer and can easily see parts of your mouth that you cannot see.**



# Focus on Mouth Cancer



**Mouth cancer is also known as oral cancer and is a general term for cancer of the mouth, including the lip, gums, throat and tongue with the lining of the mouth being the most common site for cancer. Around 200 people are diagnosed in Northern Ireland each year.**

It is more common in men than women and is rare in people under the age of 40. However, mouth cancer is changing. The gap between men and women is narrowing and it is increasing in younger patients. If mouth cancer is spotted early the chances of a complete cure are good. When cancerous lesions are small, treatment is generally less complicated and more effective. A cure is less likely if the cancer has spread.

## Symptoms of Mouth Cancer

- An ulcer on the lip, tongue or in the mouth that doesn't heal within three weeks
- Pain in the mouth or earache that persists
- A white or red patch in the mouth that doesn't go away
- A lump or thickening in the mouth, throat or on the lip
- Difficulty or pain with chewing, swallowing or speaking
- Bleeding or numbness in the mouth
- A lump in the neck
- Loose teeth for no obvious reason
- Weight loss over a short space of time



## Are you at risk of Mouth Cancer?

Circle your answers then check below

### Do you visit the dentist?

- A Often  B Sometimes  C Never

### Do you drink alcohol?

- A Never  B Sometimes  C Often

### Do you use sunscreen on your lips?

- A Often  B Sometimes  C Never

### Do you smoke?

- A Never  B Sometimes  C Often

### Do you eat five portions of fruit and vegetables daily?

- A Never  B Sometimes  C Often

All As – Your risk is low

All Bs – Your risk is moderate

All Cs – Your risk is higher

## To reduce your risk:

- Check for changes in your mouth and have regular dental check ups
- Get help to stop smoking. If you would like free help to stop smoking visit [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink
- Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables daily
- Apply a sunscreen with at least (SPF) factor 15 and 4 stars regularly on the lips if outdoors
- Don't use sunbeds
- Take regular exercise – at least 30 minutes daily
- Reduce HPV risk by practicing safer sex and limiting your number of partners

## These lifestyle factors increase the risk of mouth cancer:

- Smoking or chewing tobacco
- Regularly drinking large amounts of alcohol, especially spirits. People who use both alcohol and tobacco have a much greater risk
- Over-exposure to sunshine or use of sunbeds is a known risk for cancer of the lips
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

