

Health Awareness

Preventing Oral Cancer

(NAPSA)—The incidence of oral cancer among young adults is skyrocketing and the reason may surprise many—but so may the solution.

The Problem

According to research, the culprit is the human papillomavirus (HPV). A recent study in *The New England Journal of Medicine* revealed that people infected with HPV are 32 times more likely to develop oral or throat cancers compared to the increased risk associated with smoking (three times more likely to develop these cancers) and drinking alcohol (2½ times more likely). Unfortunately, HPV is one of the most common virus groups in the world. Different types of the virus infect different parts of the body.

An estimated 42,000 new cases of oral and throat cancers are diagnosed in the U.S. each year. The mortality rate is high—not because the cancer is hard to detect or diagnose but because it's often discovered too late. Survivors often suffer disfigurement and difficulties eating and speaking.

The number of such cancers linked to HPV has risen dramatically over the past few decades. People with oral or oropharyngeal cancer linked to HPV infection tend to be younger and are less likely to be smokers and drinkers.

An Answer

The earlier the cancer is detected, the greater the chance of a cure. While you should schedule an annual visit with your family dentist or oral and maxillofacial surgeon for a complete oral health examination, performing monthly



By examining your jaw, neck and the inside of your mouth monthly, you may be able to protect yourself from an increasingly common form of cancer.

self-exams is also important. To help, the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (AAOMS) has produced a video showing how to do a self-exam screening. It's available at MyOMS.org.

What You Can Do

All you need is a mirror and a bright light. Look inside your lips, the back and front of your gums, the roof of your mouth, both sides of your tongue and inside your cheeks. Also check for lumps or enlarged lymph nodes on both sides of the neck including under the lower jaw.

The mouth is one of the body's most important early warning systems, and suspicious lumps or sores should not be ignored.

Where To Get Help

To find a surgeon nearby, or for more information, visit <http://myoms.org>, or call (847) 678-6200 or (800) 822-6637.