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PDF generated on July 25, 2016 from  
<http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/oral-and-oropharyngeal-cancer/symptoms-and-signs>

## [Oral and Oropharyngeal Cancer - Symptoms and Signs](#)

### [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 01/2015

**ON THIS PAGE:** You will find out more about body changes and other things that can signal a problem that may need medical care. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

People with oral or oropharyngeal cancer may experience the following symptoms or signs. Sometimes, people with oral or oropharyngeal cancer do not show any of these symptoms. Or, these symptoms may be caused by a medical condition that is not cancer. Often, a dentist is the first person to find this type of cancer during a routine examination.

- Sore in the mouth or on the lip that does not heal; this is the most common symptom
- Red or white patch on the gums, tongue, tonsil, or lining of the mouth
- Lump on the lip, mouth, neck, or throat or a feeling of thickening in the cheek
- Persistent sore throat or feeling that something is caught in the throat
- Hoarseness or change in voice
- Numbness of the mouth or tongue
- Pain or bleeding in the mouth
- Difficulty chewing, swallowing, or moving the jaws or tongue
- Ear and/or jaw pain
- Chronic bad breath
- Changes in speech
- Loosening of teeth or toothache
- Dentures that no longer fit

- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite, especially when prolonged; this may happen during the later stages of the disease

If you are concerned about one or more of the symptoms or signs on this list, please talk with your doctor and/or dentist as soon as possible. Your doctor will ask how long and how often you've been experiencing the symptom(s), in addition to other questions. This is to help find out the cause of the problem, called a [diagnosis](#) [3].

If cancer is diagnosed, relieving symptoms remains an important part of cancer care and treatment. This may also be called symptom management, palliative care, or supportive care. Be sure to talk with your health care team about symptoms you experience, including any new symptoms or a change in symptoms.

## Screening

Because many of the symptoms listed above can be caused by other, noncancerous health conditions, it is important for people to receive regular health and dental screenings, especially those who routinely drink alcohol, currently use tobacco products, or have used tobacco products in the past. People who use alcohol and tobacco should receive a general screening examination at least once a year. This is a simple, quick procedure in which the doctor looks in the nose, mouth, and throat for abnormalities and feels for lumps in the neck. If anything unusual is found, the doctor will recommend a more extensive examination using one or more of the diagnostic procedures mentioned in the [diagnosis](#) [3] section. Having regular screenings is important for detecting cancers of the oral cavity and oropharynx early when they have a much better chance of being cured.

*The next section helps explain what tests and scans may be needed to learn more about the cause of the symptoms. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select Diagnosis, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.*

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### Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/oral-and-oropharyngeal-cancer/symptoms-and-signs>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19458>