



## A Message from Your Lake Arrowhead Dentist:



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### Detecting Oral Cancer Can Save Your Life

An essential part of your comprehensive dental health care should include an oral cancer screening by your dentist during your annual dental examination. This visual and manual screening should also take place during your visit with the dental hygienist when you are having your teeth cleaned and takes less than five minutes. Early detection and evaluation (which may include biopsy of suspicious areas) enhances positive results.

Oral cancer often has no symptoms until it reaches more advanced stages, so the routine screening is a simple process that could save your life, or that of someone you know. Typically oral cancer was found in those persons with a history of smoking, using chewing tobacco, or significant alcohol use. This historic pattern has been changing with the rise of HPV infection (human papilloma virus), especially in younger adults related to sexual contact.

A vaccination is now available to prevent HPV infections and is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control for boys and girls beginning around age 12. More information about the HPV vaccination can be obtained from your medical doctor and dentist.

The following symptoms are the most common when oral cancers advance:

- A sore or ulcer (often discolored) on the lip or in the mouth that does not heal
- A lump on the lip, in the mouth or in the neck
- White or red patches on the gums, tongue or cheeks
- Unusual or recurrent bleeding, pain or numbness in the mouth, lips or tongue
- Oral pain that does not go away and that is not tooth related
- Difficulty or pain with chewing, swallowing or jaw opening (that is not related to TMJ/joint dysfunction)
- Tooth loosening that is not related to gum disease
- Abnormal taste in the mouth

Regular dental health care is always the most effective approach to maintaining good dental and overall physical health. If you don't know if your dentist and dental hygienists are providing visual and manual oral cancer screenings during your appointments, ask them to be sure. Some oral cancers can occur in persons with no history of high risk behaviors; a family history of cancer could increase your own risk.

*Yours for better dental health,*

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