

**Press Release**

**Mouth Cancer Awareness Day: No Teeth? - No Excuse!**

* **Older population reminded to get checked for mouth cancer.**
* **Over 700 cases[[1]](#footnote-1) of mouth, head and neck cancer are diagnosed every year in Ireland.**
* **The number of people diagnosed with mouth, head and neck cancer is set to increase by up to 30% in the next 25 years.**
* **Launch of new information website**  [www.mouthcancer.ie](http://www.mouthcancer.ie)

On Mouth Cancer Awareness Day, members of our older community are being urged to be aware of the signs and symptoms of mouth cancer and to attend their dentist at least once a year for a routine examination of their mouth, even if they have no remaining natural teeth.

Mouth Cancer Awareness Day (MCAD) takes place on Wednesday 16th September 2020 and is supported by the main dental health organisations, the Irish Cancer Society and the National Cancer Control programme. Over 700 cases[[2]](#footnote-2) of mouth, head and neck cancer are diagnosed every year in Ireland, and this figure has been steadily increasing in recent years. While Mouth, Head & Neck Cancer can occur at any age, the majority of mouth cancers are diagnosed in the over 55’s, regardless of whether or not they still have their own natural teeth or may be wearing dentures.

This year the Mouth Cancer Awareness campaign is advising the older population and their carers to be particularly mindful of the early signs of mouth cancer and to seek advice and treatment from their dentist or doctor.

If detected early, treatment for mouth cancer can be more straightforward and have an excellent outcome. Unfortunately for those who are diagnosed at a late stage, the outcomes can be poor and affected individuals can be left with life altering changes to their appearance and their ability to speak, eat and swallow.

Susan Richmond a mouth cancer patient from Cork said “Like a lot of people, I didn't like the dentist. I only went if I really had to. I just wish that I had taken that step earlier and perhaps, I wouldn't look and sound as I do today. Be aware of your own mouth. You look at your face daily, you clean your teeth daily. Note any changes in your mouth...and if you do find anything you're not sure about, go to your dentist. Im proof this can be beaten, life can go on"

Dr Eleanor O Sullivan, Cork University Dental School said, “The number of people diagnosed with mouth, head and neck cancer is set to increase by up to 30% in the next 25 years. While this cancer receives little publicity, it is more lethal than breast cancer, cervical cancer or malignant melanoma. Those over the age of 55 who smoke and /or drink are most at risk. We can turn the tide on this disease by avoiding known risk factors (smoking, alcohol, HPV), knowing the warning signs and encouraging people to be mouth aware and to seek help from their dentist or GP if they have any ulcers or other lesions that do not heal in 3 weeks. Survival and quality of life is greatly improved when these cancers are diagnosed early and treated quickly.”

Dr Denise Mc Carthy, Dublin Dental University Hospital said, “Our message on MCAD 2020 is one of hope and self-awareness. Prevention of mouth cancer is helped by having a healthy lifestyle, controlling mouth cancer risk factors by quitting smoking and alcohol consumption and getting the HPV vaccination. Early detection and diagnosis of mouth cancer is improved by attending your dentist every year for an examination of your mouth, even if you have no remaining natural teeth. Early detection and treatment of cancer will greatly improve treatment outcome, long-term survival and quality of life.”

MCAD is an annual event and over the years the Mouth Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Ireland group have hosted many public events. In light of the current restrictions, MCAD 2020 will be a “virtual” event with information distributed to groups working with the older community. To facilitate sharing of information, a new website has been launched: [www.mouthcancer.ie](http://www.mouthcancer.ie) The website provides clear information, videos and pictures of how to maintain good oral health, reduce the risk of mouth cancer, identify the signs of mouth cancer, what to watch out for, and what to do if worried about any particular symptom.

Signs of mouth, head and neck cancer can include an ulcer, white or red patches inside the mouth, a lump in the mouth or neck, or a persistent sore throat or hoarseness. If people have these symptoms for more than three weeks, they should contact their dentist or doctor.

People, who have not visited a dentist in the past year to have a routine mouth check-up, are urged to make an appointment. The vast majority of the population are entitled to a free dental check-up every year. Everyone who has a medical card is entitled to a free examination annually while most other people will be covered under the PRSI scheme.

For more information go to [www.mouthcancer.ie](http://www.mouthcancer.ie)

If anyone is worried or affected by any aspect of mouth head and neck cancer, they can talk to a cancer nurse on the Irish Cancer Society’s Cancer Support Line, Freephone 1800 200 700 or go to [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie)

**ENDS.**

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**Notes to Editor**

Mouth Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Ireland group was setup in 2009.

Members of the group: Dental Health Foundation, Dublin Dental University Hospital, Cork University Dental School & Hospital, Irish Cancer Society, Irish Dental Association, National Cancer Control Programme, Spunout.ie and Cancer Survivors.

Mouth Cancer Awareness Day takes place on Wednesday 16th September 2020

Checkout the New website. [www.mouthcancer.ie](http://www.mouthcancer.ie) see [Susans Personal story](https://www.mouthcancer.ie/personal-stories)

**Mouth Head and Neck Cancer Risk Factors:**

* Smoking
* Drinking alcohol
* Age- mouth, head and neck cancers are most common in people over 50 but everyone should be vigilant if symptoms arise as younger people can also be diagnosed
* Gender - mouth, head and neck cancers are more common in men
* UV exposure from the sun or sunbeds - particularly to the lips
* Diet- not eating enough fruit and vegetables may leave you more susceptible to cancer
* Human papilloma virus (HPV) - it is passed on through sexual contact (including oral sex) and may increase your chances of getting cancer of the mouth, head and neck

**You can reduce your risk by:**

* Avoid smoking
* Limit your alcohol consumption
* Always use a lip balm with sun protection
* Eat a diet high in fruit and vegetables
* Good oral hygiene – Brush your teeth twice a day and check your mouth/neck for symptoms/changes when brushing your teeth - early warning signs include ulcers that do not heal within three weeks, red or white patches in the mouth, or other unusual changes in the mouth or neck.
* Get regular dental and mouth check-ups (at least once year) - this is especially important if you smoke and drink alcohol

**Symptoms of Mouth, Head and Neck Cancer include:**

* A sore or ulcer in the mouth that doesn’t heal
* An ongoing sore throat, hoarse voice or difficulty speaking
* Problems chewing or swallowing
* White or red patches in the mouth
* A swelling or a lump anywhere in the mouth or neck
* Nose bleeds or a persistent blocked nose
* Problems with hearing or ringing in the ears
* Pain in the face or jaw
* Numbness
* A thickening or hardness of the cheek or tongue
* Unexplained loose teeth

If you are experiencing any of these signs for **more than three weeks** you should contact your dentist or doctor within 7 days so you can have them checked.

If anyone is worried about any aspect of mouth head and neck cancer, they can contact the Irish Cancer Society Cancer Nurseline on Freephone 1800 200 700.

1. <https://www.ncri.ie/sites/ncri/files/pubs/CancerIncidenceProjections_NCRI_fullreport_09042019_final.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.ncri.ie/sites/ncri/files/pubs/CancerIncidenceProjections_NCRI_fullreport_09042019_final.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)