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# **Are you at risk for oral cancer?**

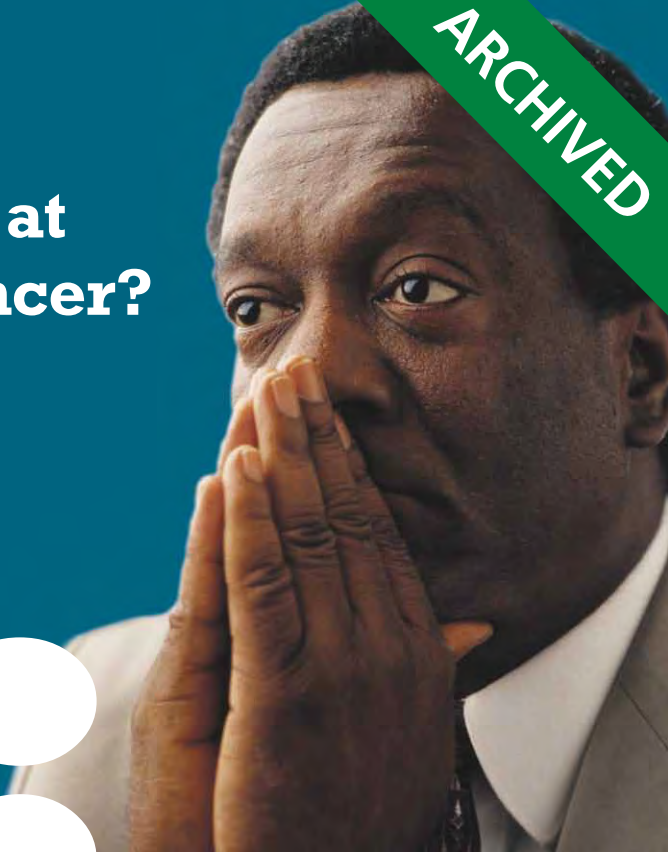
**What African American men need to know**

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
National Institutes of Health**



# **Are African American men at risk for oral cancer?**

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**Yes, African American men are one of the groups at highest risk for oral cancer—but many don't know it.**

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Most cases of oral cancer are linked to cigarette smoking, heavy alcohol use, or the use of both tobacco and alcohol together. In fact, using tobacco plus alcohol poses a much greater risk than using either substance alone.

Certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV) may also play a part in oral cancer.

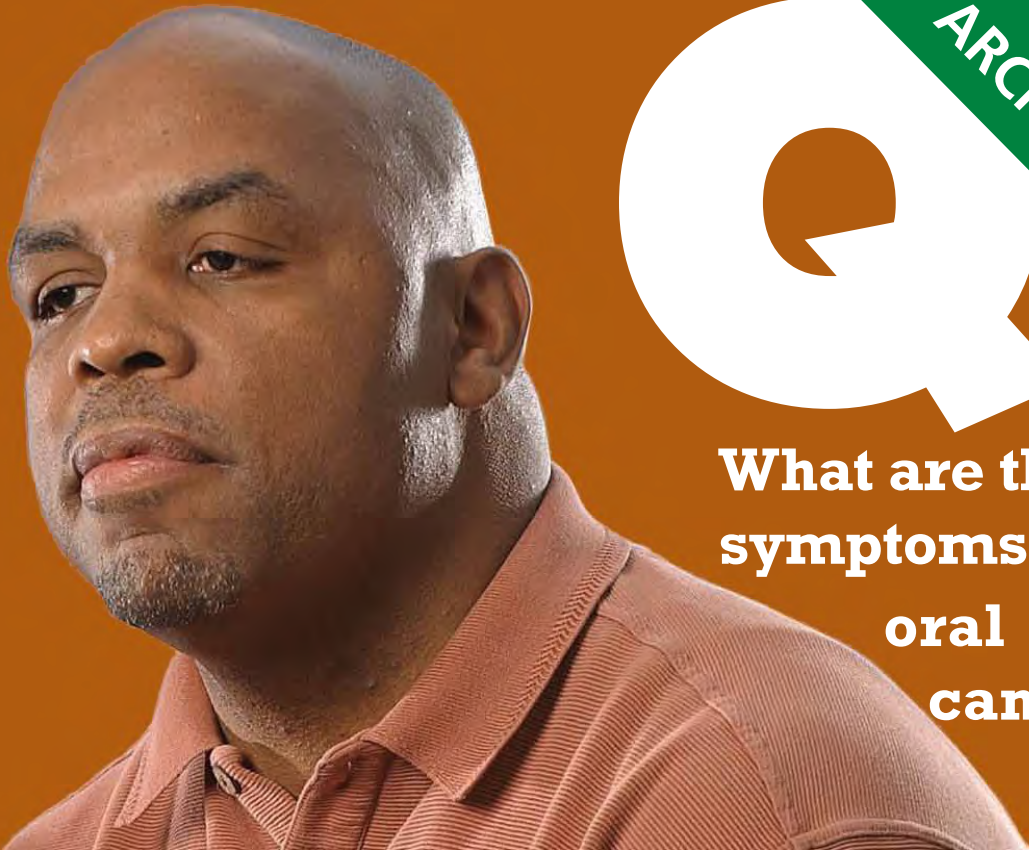
**It's not just smokeless tobacco (“dip” and “chew”).  
Using tobacco of any kind, including cigarettes,  
puts you at risk for oral cancer.**

**The risk of oral cancer increases with age.  
Most oral cancers occur after age 40.**

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**What are the  
symptoms of  
oral  
cancer?**





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## Possible Signs & Symptoms

- A sore, irritation, lump or thick patch in your mouth, lip, or throat
- A white or red patch in your mouth
- A feeling that something is caught in your throat
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Difficulty moving your jaw or tongue
- Numbness in your tongue or other areas of your mouth
- Swelling of your jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
- Pain in one ear without hearing loss

**Be on the lookout for any changes in your mouth,  
especially if you smoke or drink.**

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**What should you  
do if you have  
symptoms?**



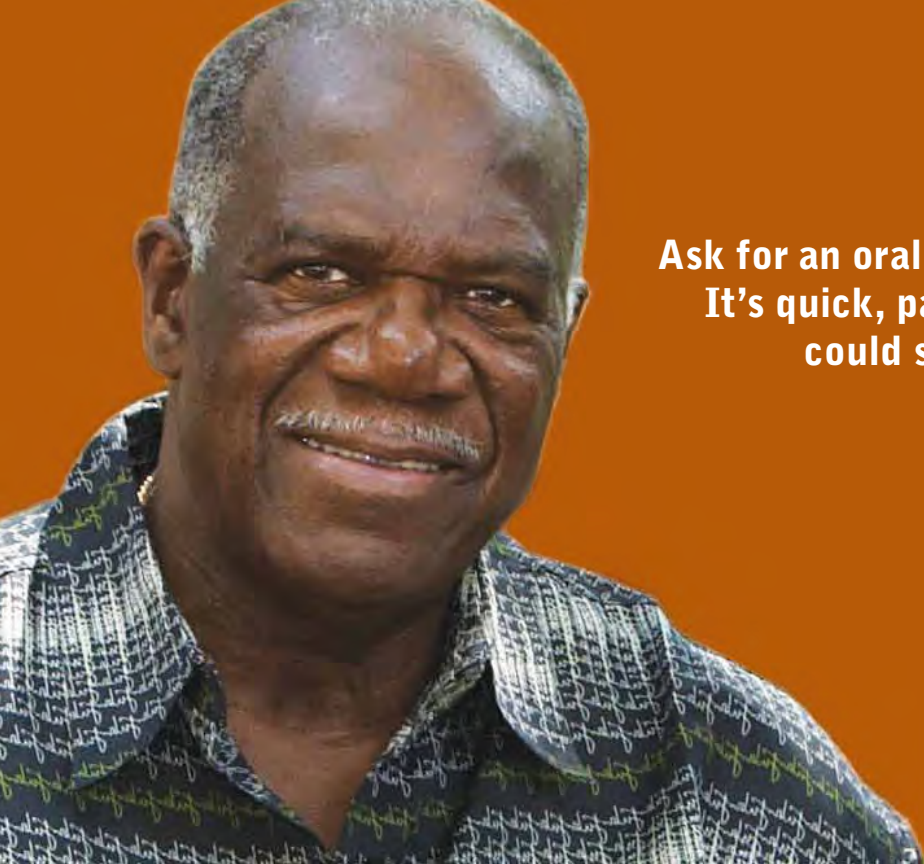


**See a doctor or dentist if any symptoms last more than 2 weeks.**

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Most often, symptoms (like those listed in the previous section) do not mean cancer. An infection or another problem can cause the same symptoms. But it's important to get them checked out—because if you do have cancer, it can be treated more successfully if it's caught early.

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A close-up portrait of an older Black man with a mustache, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark blue patterned shirt with a white and green geometric design. The background is a solid orange color.

**Ask for an oral cancer exam.  
It's quick, painless, and it  
could save your life.**



## The Oral Cancer Exam

### About Oral Cancer

The term oral cancer includes cancers of the mouth and the pharynx (FAIR-inks), part of the throat.

An oral cancer examination can detect early signs of cancer. The exam is painless—and takes only a few minutes.

During the exam, your doctor or dentist will check your face, neck, lips, entire mouth, and the back of your throat for possible signs of cancer.

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For additional copies of this publication contact:

National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research  
National Oral Health Information Clearinghouse  
1 NOHIC Way  
Bethesda, MD 20892 3500  
1 866 232-4528  
<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov>



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