

The Oral Cancer Exam

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An oral cancer exam is painless and quick—it takes only a few minutes.

Here's what to expect:

1

Preparing for the exam: If you have dentures (plates) or partials, you will be asked to remove them.

2

Your doctor or dentist will inspect your face, neck, lips, and mouth.

3

With both hands, he or she will feel the area under your jaw and the side of your neck, checking for unusual lumps.

4 Next, your doctor or dentist will have you stick out your tongue to check for swelling or abnormal color or texture.

5 Using gauze, he or she will then gently pull your tongue to one side, then the other, to check the base of your tongue. The underside of your tongue will also be checked.

6 In addition, he or she will look at the roof and floor of your mouth, as well as the back of your throat.

7 He or she will then look at and feel the insides of your lips and cheeks to check for possible signs of cancer, such as red and/or white patches.

8 Finally, your doctor or dentist will put one finger on the floor of your mouth and, with the other hand under your chin, gently press down to check for unusual lumps or sensitivity.

This card was developed by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research with the National Cancer Institute, components of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md.

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