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Oral Cancer Awareness Month: Early Detection Is Crucial To Improving Odds Of Survival

Peter Christensen Dental Clinic's Dr. Wilson: 'Ask your dentist to check for oral cancer each visit.'

LAC DU FLAMBEAU— Every hour, 24-hours-a-day, 365-days-a-year, someone dies of oral or oropharyngeal cancer (cancer of the back of the oral cavity and upper throat), according to the Oral Cancer Foundation. Yet if oral cancer is detected and treated early, treatment-related health problems are reduced, and survival rates may increase.

“Early detection is key, and the more you wait the worse it gets,” says Peter Christensen Dental Clinic’s Dr. Kelsey Wilson, who’s speaking out to help educate people about oral cancer.

“Symptoms include red or white patches, lumps or bumps, or unusual nerve pain within your mouth, throat and neck areas. Some symptoms can appear without pain at first, but, if you wait until something is painful, it can mean the cancer is in advanced stages and harder to treat.”

This year an estimated 54,000 new cases of oral cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S, according to the Oral Cancer Foundation. Of those individuals, 43 percent will not survive longer than five years, and many who do survive suffer long-term problems, such as severe facial disfigurement or difficulties with eating and speaking. Death rates for oral and oropharyngeal (throat) cancers remains particularly high because the cancers often are discovered late in their development.

“Ask for an oral cancer examination every time you visit your dentist,” Dr. Wilson says. “Better yet, make sure your dentist checks for cancer as part of your regular visits every six months.”

***Signs and symptoms of oral cancer which is predominantly caused by tobacco usage and/or excessive alcohol usage may include one or more of the following:**

- Any sore or ulceration that does not heal within 14 days.
- A red, white, or black discoloration of the soft tissues of the mouth.
- Any abnormality that bleeds easily when touched (friable).
- A lump or hard spot in the tissue, usually border of the tongue (induration).
- Tissue raised above that which surrounds it; a growth (exophytic).
- A sore under a denture, which even after adjustment of the denture, does not heal.
- A lump or thickening that develops in the mouth.
- A painless, firm, fixated lump felt on the outside of the neck, which has been there for at least two weeks.
- All the above symptoms have the commonality of being persistent and not resolving.

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PETER CHRISTENSEN
HEALTH CENTER

COMPREHENSIVE CARE
PROVIDING CARE TO THE LAC DU FLAMBEAU COMMUNITY, VILAS, ONEIDA, AND IRON COUNTIES

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***Signs and symptoms of HPV-caused oropharyngeal cancer may include one or more of the following (which may persist longer than two-three weeks):**

- Hoarseness or sore throat that does not resolve within a few weeks.
- A swollen tonsil on just one side. This is usually painless.
- A painless, firm, fixated lump felt on the outside of the neck, which has been there for at least two weeks.
- A persistent cough that does not resolve after many days.
- Difficulty swallowing; a sensation that food is getting caught in your throat.
- An earache on one side (unilateral) which persists for more than a few days.
- All the above symptoms have the commonality of being persistent and not resolving.
- Always call your dentist right away if there are any immediate concerns.

To make an appointment with Peter Christensen Dental Clinic, call (715) 588-4269.

*Source: Oral Cancer Foundation

Peter Christensen Health Center, an AAAHC accredited healthcare provider, meets community members needs through coordinated, patient-centered, comprehensive health and wellness service that includes education, collaboration and patient sensitivity.

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