

# **Tooth Talk**

## **“Hey Doc, I see a white spot on my tongue! Is that cancer?”**

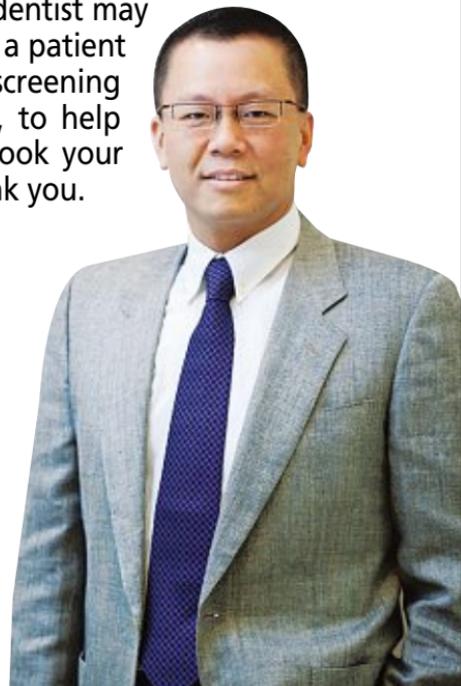
Nowadays, oral cancer rates are on the rise. In the United Kingdom, it has been reported that oral cancer cases have increased by more than 25% in the last decade. The Canadian Cancer Society estimates that 3400 new cases of oral cancer were diagnosed in Canada in 2010. It is also estimated that 1150 of those Canadians diagnosed in 2010 will die from the disease.

Unfortunately, many people assume that smoking is the only cause of oral cancer. Therefore, most non-smokers believe that they are safe from oral cancer. In reality, oral cancer can arise from other causes.

The followings are some of the most common causes of oral cancer:

- Smoking is known to increase the risk of oral cancer. In fact, all tobacco products can lead to oral cancer. Therefore, people who chew tobacco are at risk as well.
- Alcohol use - Heavy alcohol use leads to oral cancer risks, especially in conjunction with smoking. The more alcohol one consumes, the more likely that person will develop oral cancer.
- Age - The risk of developing oral cancer increases with age.
- Gender - In the past, men have been at a higher risk of developing oral cancer than women. However, cases of oral cancer among women are increasing at an alarming rate in the past decade.
- Virus - HPV(Human Papillomavirus Virus) has been linked with oral cancers. HPV is a sexually transmitted disease that can be transmitted through oral sex.
- Sun exposure - Exposure to the sun can lead to the development of oral cancer.
- Diet - Poor diet can lead to oral cancer. Eating fruits and vegetables can lower the risk of oral cancer.

Your dentist can play an important role in the early detection of oral cancer. Dentistry is about prevention and the dental exam is the key to good oral health. A dentist may notice subtle changes in the mouth that a patient won't. Also, there are now oral cancer screening devices available, such as the Velscope, to help dentists diagnose oral cancer lesions. Book your dental exam today. Your health will thank you.



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**4 Russell St. E., Lindsay**  
**[www.drVictorsun.com](http://www.drVictorsun.com)**  
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