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**Know the risks: Prevent Oral Cancer**  
*April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month*

Baltimore, MD (April XX, 2014) – Brushing your teeth for two minutes with fluoride toothpaste, twice a day can save your smile. Taking the time for a painless two minute oral cancer exam during a regular medical or dental check-up can save your life.

April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month and it is important that the public know and understand the risk factors, signs and symptoms of the disease. Oral cancer may appear as unusual red or white patches or sores inside the mouth, and on the tongue or lips, and swelling in the head and neck region. Oral cancer is most successfully treated when these often-unnoticed changes are found early in the course of the disease, while still painless. If you have any of the following signs or symptoms for more than two weeks, see your dental or medical provider immediately:

- A white or red patch in the mouth
- A sore, irritation, lump or thickening of the mouth
- Persistent sore throat, pain when swallowing, earaches
- Hoarseness or feeling that something is caught in the throat
- Difficulty moving the tongue or jaw
- Numbness of the tongue or other areas of the mouth
- Swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
- Unexplained weight loss

Over 650 Marylanders will be diagnosed with oral cancer this year. “While the survival rate for oral cancer has somewhat improved over the past 50 years, they are still too low,” said Dr. Harry Goodman, Director for the Office of Oral Health in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. “Unfortunately, this is because too many people are diagnosed with oral cancer at a late stage. While tobacco use remains a principal cause, other risk factors such as heavy

alcohol use and exposure to the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) play a role in the disease process.”

Limiting alcoholic drinks, using a lip balm with an SPF of at least 15 anytime you are outdoors, eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, and limiting certain sexual behaviors that place you at higher risk for exposure to HPV are all effective ways to reduce your risk of oral cancer. However, “quitting tobacco use remains the best action anyone can take to prevent this deadly disease,” said (insert LOCAL NAME)

Quitting tobacco can be challenging but tobacco users don’t have to go through this journey alone! Marylanders ages 13 and older can call The Maryland Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW ([1-800-784-8669](tel:1-800-784-8669)). The Quitline is a FREE telephone-based counseling service, and is available seven days a week/24 hours a day. This free program is available to all callers regardless of income or how long they have used tobacco. In addition, the Quitline now offers enhanced cessation counseling to pregnant women. Eligible callers ages 18 and older may also receive up to a four-week supply of nicotine patches or gum while supplies last, as well as web and text based support. For more information about the Maryland Tobacco Quitline, call 1-800-QUIT NOW ([1-800-784-8669](tel:1-800-784-8669)), or visit [www.quitnow.net/maryland](http://www.quitnow.net/maryland).

For more information on oral cancer visit the Office of Oral Health website, <http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth>.

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