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**Prevent Oral Cancer**  
*April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month*

Baltimore, MD (April XX, 2012) – April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month, a nationwide effort aimed at educating the public about the risk factors, signs and symptoms of the disease.

“The good news about oral cancer is that it is highly preventable,” said (*Insert local Health Officer*). “Tobacco use, alcohol use, becoming infected with the human papillomavirus, and sun exposure are all risk factors for mouth cancer. Lifestyle changes that reduce these risk factors offer the best protection from this deadly disease.”

Approximately 550 Marylanders will be diagnosed with oral cancer this year. “The survival rate for oral cancer, unlike most other cancers, hasn’t improved much over the past 50 years,” said Dr. Harry Goodman, Director for the Office of Oral Health in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. “Unfortunately, this is because most people are diagnosed with oral cancer at a late stage.”

Your dental or medical provider should provide an exam for oral cancer on an annual basis. This painless, two-minute oral cancer exam looks for unusual red or white skin patches or sores inside the mouth or on the lips or tongue and swelling in the head and neck region. Oral cancer is most successfully treated when these often-unnoticed skin changes are found early in the course of the disease while still painless. If you are not sure if you have had an exam for oral cancer, be sure to ask at your next visit. Two minutes can save your life.

*(more)*

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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
- 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

Tobacco users who need help with quitting can get free counseling and medication by calling The Maryland Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). This program provides phone-based counseling and up to a four-week supply of nicotine patches or gum to tobacco users who are age 18 and over and meet basic health requirements. This free program is available to all callers regardless of income or how long they have smoked. The nicotine patches and gum are available only while supplies last and are provided on a first come, first served basis.

For more information about oral cancer prevention and the Maryland 1-800-QUIT NOW program, please call your local health department or visit

<http://fha.dhmh.maryland.gov/oralhealth>.

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