

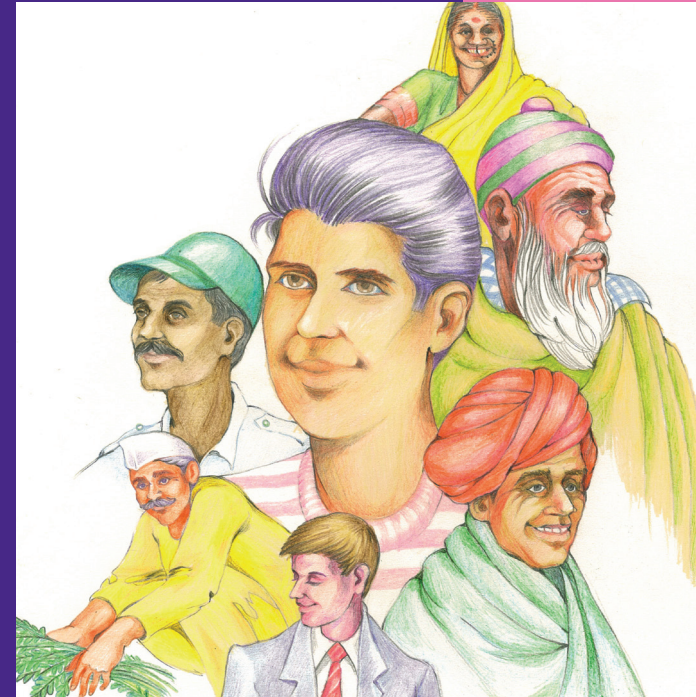
Remember:

- Oral cancer caused by tobacco can be prevented by quitting tobacco in all forms.
- Checking your mouth will help detect oral cancer at an early stage.
- The treatment of oral cancer in its early stage is less troublesome. It also can cure the cancer.

Steps I am willing to take for my oral health:

- I will stop using tobacco in all forms.
- I will check my mouth when I brush my teeth.
- I will report any patches, ulcers, or sores in my mouth to my doctor immediately.

Let's Talk about Taking Care of Your Mouth



Creation of this material was made possible in part by a pioneering grant from CBCC-USA.

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India Project

Distributed by



India Cancer Initiative





R: Hello, Shyam. Good to see you after such a long time. What are you chewing?

S: Oh, it is just a pastime.

R: It's gutkha! Shyam! Since when have you started chewing tobacco?

S: Come on, gutkha is not tobacco, its just paan-masala ...

R: Gutkha has a lot of tobacco in it, along with other bad things. The betel-nut, catechu, and other chemicals in gutkha are harmful, too. They can cause many problems, including cancer of the mouth.

S: Why will I get cancer? I do not smoke cigarettes or beedis.

R: Dear friend, in India most cases of mouth (oral) cancer are caused by chewing tobacco. This cancer may begin as a harmless-looking mouth sore or white patch and can progress to a deadly cancerous growth if ignored or not detected in time. Chewing tobacco is just as addictive as smoking, so you have to try very hard to give up this habit.

S: How will I know about the effects of gutkha in my mouth?

R: You can check your mouth while brushing your teeth. All you need to do is look inside your mouth while standing in front of a mirror and check for any white- or red-colored patches, mouth ulcers, or sores. If you have a mouth ulcer that has not healed for a long time or if you have increasing difficulty opening your mouth, you need to see your doctor immediately. A simple scraping or a needle examination will tell you whether it is cancer. These tests are cheap and can be done in your doctor's office.

S: I have heard that the treatment (surgery) for oral cancer can leave me disfigured.

R: Radical, disfiguring surgery is needed only when the cancer has grown very big. If it is a small growth, a small surgery can be done that will not change your appearance at all. That is the reason why you need to check your mouth regularly so you can find mouth sores early.

S: What if I find an ulcer or a sore?

R: Your doctor will check it and may ask for more tests before deciding on the best treatment for you. If detected early, oral cancer is curable with little or no long-term effects. The most important thing you can do is quit tobacco in every form – smoking cigarettes or beedis, chewing gutkha or tobacco leaves. This will reduce your chances of getting oral cancer. It will also keep your mouth and teeth clean, reduce bad breath, and help you enjoy your food better. Be aware that betel nut is not a healthy alternative to tobacco; it can also cause mouth cancer.