

Just to Let You Know

DIY dentistry-I don't think so!

But self help and self examination is definitely a good idea. Everyone can check inside their mouths, look at the gums, skin surface and the teeth., as well as the skin on their face.

We need a mirror, good light and if necessary, reading glasses. If glasses are necessary for reading then they should be used for checking the mouth and when cleaning the teeth.

A self examination for oral cancer.

You are looking for any of the following changes which should be reported to the practice:

1. Sores on the face, neck or mouth that don't heal in 2 weeks.
2. White or dark red patches in the mouth.
3. Swelling, lumps, bumps or growths.
4. Pain or numbness in the face, neck or mouth.

Using your fingers:

Face: Begin with the hairline and look for any changes in skin colour, including moles, lumps, bumps and sores. Both sides of your face and neck should have the same size, shape and form. Feel the entire face with your fingertips for lumps and numbness.

Side of Neck: Using your right hand, feel the front and back of the left large muscle running from your ear to collarbone. Feel under the jaw from the ear to the chin. Repeat on the right side using the left hand.

Center of Neck: Find the "Adam's apple" and place your fingers against it and swallow; it should move. Feel for lumps and soreness on both sides to the collar bone.

Lips: Pull down your lower lip, look for sores or color change. Squeeze your lip checking for swelling, tenderness and colour change.

Cheeks: Place your thumb on the outside of your cheek and the index finger on the inside and gently squeeze your cheek. Note any swelling, lumps or soreness. Pull back your cheek so you can see the tissue and look for colour changes such as red, white or dark areas. Repeat the other cheek.

Gums: Look on the inside and outside of your gums for lumps, bleeding, red and white areas. If you wear dentures, look for white or red areas on the gums. Are there any sores that have not healed for longer than 14 days?

Tongue and floor of mouth: Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Look for sores under the tongue. With your finger feel the floor of your mouth for lumps or growths. Extend your tongue out and look and feel the top and the sides and note any colour change, lumps or sores.

Roof of mouth: With an index finger gently press against the roof of the mouth to feel for lumps, swelling or soreness.

A self examination for gums:

Healthy gums are pale pink, and slightly stippled when dried. They should not bleed when brushed or flossed. If you see bleeding then go back and clean again.

A self examination for teeth

Dental decay is usually hidden and often not seen until teeth are x-rayed. You can, however, see plaque-a creamy white coating –either a smear or (if cleaning is really poor) thick patches. This can be removed with a brush and is SMELLY!

This oral exam should not take the place of professional dental care. Any areas that appear abnormal should be reported to Christine. So, go on have a look. We even have small plastic mouth mirrors for sale in the practice for the really enthusiastic.