

## Mouth cancer – early detection is crucial

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Sir, – A new diagnosis of mouth head and neck (MHN) cancers affect more than 700 individuals in Ireland every year. This number is greatly increased when the long-term personal effects of these cancers and their treatment are taken into consideration.

Early detection of MHN cancers greatly improves the chances for successful treatment. The majority of these cancer patients are diagnosed late, resulting in poorer survival rates, immense suffering and reduced quality of life.

Mouth cancer is most common in the over-50 age group, and those who smoke and/or drink alcohol are at an increased risk, making it essential for older people to attend the dentist regularly, even if they have no remaining natural teeth.

The Mouth Head & Neck Cancer Awareness Ireland Group strongly encourages anyone who has an ulcer or sore that does not heal, white or red patches in the mouth, a lump in mouth or neck, difficulty swallowing or a sore throat for more than three weeks to contact their dentist or doctor.

We strongly advise people to attend their dentist at least once a year for a routine oral examination. The vast majority of the population is entitled to a free dental check-up every year.

The best cure is prevention – you can reduce risk of mouth cancer by not smoking, avoiding alcohol, using lip sunblock and visiting your dentist regularly.

Visit [mouthcancer.ie](http://mouthcancer.ie) for further information. – Yours, etc,

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