



Stick Your Tongue Out at Your Dentist

SUBMITTED BY KATE GILSON, DDS

WOULDN'T YOU JUST LOVE TO STICK YOUR TONGUE OUT at your dentist? Well, every six months you should be getting the chance to!

The reason? An extremely important oral cancer screening. This screening is a chance for your dentist to look for signs of cancer or any pre-cancerous conditions in your mouth. At each of your routine dental cleaning appointments, you should be asked to "stick your tongue out." After doing so, your dentist will gently move it from side to side, giving them the opportunity to check all of the soft tissue areas in your mouth to make sure there are no suspicious lesions or areas.

This includes things like unusual red spots, white spots, sores, bumps, etc. – anything that shouldn't be there! They may also feel the tissues in your mouth and surrounding areas to make sure everything feels normal beneath the surface. There are also several additional screening tools available to dentists, like special lights and/or rinses, to help further identify any areas that may have abnormal cells. If any suspicious areas are noticed, you may be referred to an oral surgeon for a follow-up appointment and possibly a biopsy.

In addition to the soft tissue exam, another important tool for ruling out potential lesions is routine dental x-rays. Tumors, cysts and other

discrepancies may be present in the bone, and like the soft tissue lesions, are often asymptomatic – thus providing you with no warning signs. Most of these areas within the jaw bone can only be seen with the help of dental x-rays. Almost all dental offices have converted to digital dental x-rays, making the exposure to radiation so minimal that there's absolutely no good reason to forgo this extremely important screening tool.

Some things you can do to help minimize your chances of getting oral cancer are avoiding all tobacco products (especially chewing tobacco), avoiding e-cigarettes and other vape products, and limiting alcohol consumption. Limiting sun exposure may also help reduce your risk of oral cancer forming on your lips. Also, if you ever notice any suspicious areas, or have a sore spot that just won't heal, be sure to give your dentist a call immediately for further evaluation.

The number of people diagnosed with oral cancer has been increasing over the past several years. Furthermore, many of these cases are now being linked to the sexually transmitted infection Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Don't miss the chance to have a professional perform this very important screening on you. Call today for your routine dental appointment! This screening takes just 30 seconds – and just might save your life!

Dr. Kate Gilson

Serving Lake Country families,
from toddlers to adults, for over
20 years.

262.542.0431 | waukeshafamilydentistry.com



Chosen as one of the
"Top Milwaukee-area
Dentists" every year
since 2015

