

# Oral Cancer Statistics

## Oral Cancer in the United States

### Overview

Oral cancer includes cancers of the mouth and pharynx (the back of the throat).

Oral cancer accounts for roughly two percent of all cancers diagnosed annually in the United States. Approximately 36,500 people will be diagnosed with oral cancer each year and about 7,900 will die from the disease.

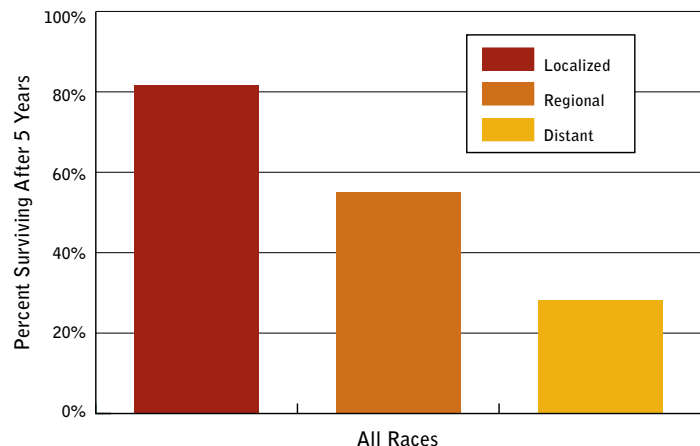
### Stage at Diagnosis: Effects on Treatment Options and Survival

If oral cancer is caught when the disease is still localized (when it has not spread beyond the original tumor site), the 5-year relative survival rate is 83 percent. However, half of oral cancers are not diagnosed until the cancer has spread to nearby tissues or lymph nodes (regional cancer). At this stage, the 5-year relative survival rate drops to 55 percent. And those diagnosed when the cancer has spread further, to distant organs, have only a 32 percent 5-year relative survival rate.

Treatment for very early stage oral cancer may only require minor surgery to remove the cancer. In contrast, treatments required for later stage diagnosis can be extensive and disfiguring, and make it difficult to eat and swallow. These treatments may include surgery to remove parts of the lip, tongue, cheek, jaw, or neck. Chemotherapy and radiation to the head and neck can cause jaw pain and mouth sores, and salivary glands can cease to function.

Oral Cancer 5-Year Relative Survival Rate by Stage at Diagnosis

Source: Cancer Statistics Review 1975-2007  
Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program, National Cancer Institute  
SEER 17, Diagnosis Years 2000-2007 and SEER 13, Diagnosis Year 1999



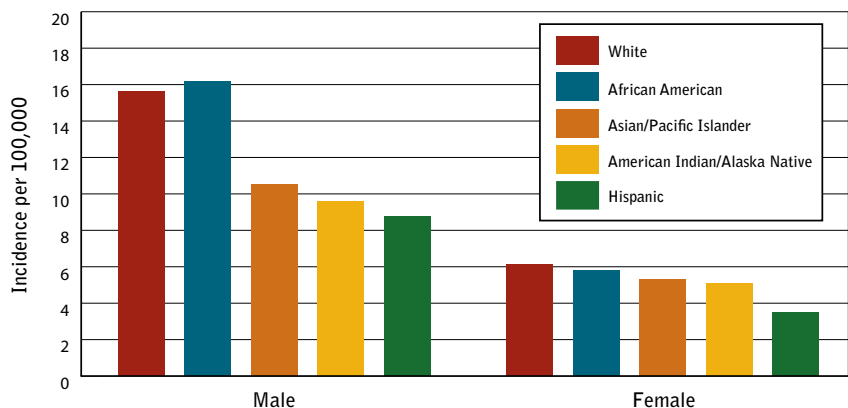
## African American Men and Oral Cancer

### Incidence (number of new cases)

African American men are one of the groups at highest risk for developing oral cancer. Between 2003 and 2007 the incidence rate among African American men was 16 per 100,000.

Incidence of Oral Cancer by Gender and Race

Source: Cancer Statistics Review 1975-2007  
Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program, National Cancer Institute  
SEER 17, Diagnosis Years 2003-2007



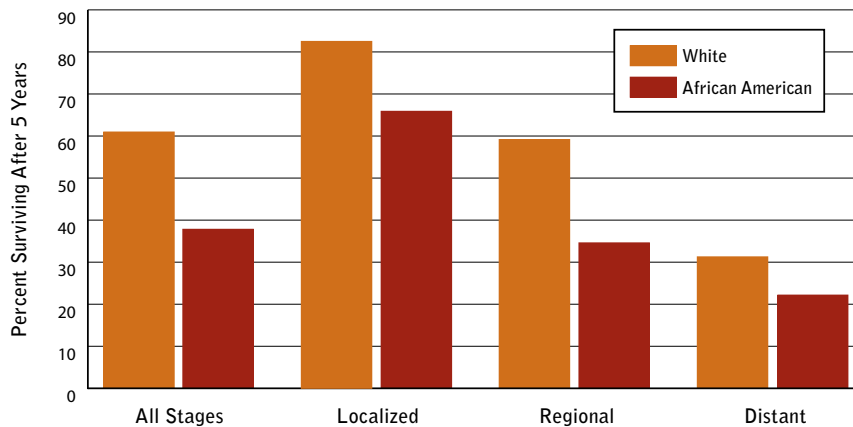
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## Survival

The difference in survival rates between African American men and white men is staggering—62 percent of white men survive more than 5 years but only 38 percent of African American males live that long with the disease.

Oral Cancer 5-Year Relative Survival Rate for Males by Stage at Diagnosis

Source: Cancer Statistics Review 1975-2007  
Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program, National Cancer Institute



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## Importance of Early Detection

It's important to find oral cancer early when it can be treated more successfully. Educating African American men about oral cancer's signs and symptoms—and the need to see a dentist or doctor if symptoms last more than 2 weeks—are key steps toward improving survival.

## Additional Reading

National Cancer Institute Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results Program. (no date). *SEER Stat Fact Sheets: Oral Cavity and Pharynx*. Retrieved February 7, 2011, from <http://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/oralcav.html>.

Altekruse SF, Kosary CL, Krapcho M, Neyman N, Aminou R, Waldron W, Ruhl J, Howlander N, Tatalovich Z, Cho H, Mariotto A, Eisner MP, Lewis DR, Cronin K, Chen HS, Feuer EJ, Stinchcomb DG, Edwards BK (eds). *SEER Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2007*, National Cancer Institute. Bethesda, MD, [http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975\\_2007/](http://seer.cancer.gov/csr/1975_2007/), based on November 2009 SEER data submission, posted to the SEER web site, 2010.

National Cancer Institute's Dictionary of Cancer Terms. (no date). Retrieved February 7, 2011, from <http://www.cancer.gov/dictionary>.