

Keeping Healthy Requires Early Oral Cancer Screening

New locally developed Velscope is essential

The Velscope is a new technology that was developed here in British Columbia and researched at VGH which uses a special light to detect oral cancers at an early stage. The light will cause healthy tissues to fluoresce (glow) green. Unhealthy tissues will not fluoresce and appear darker. A good analogy is looking for a bruise on a Granny Smith apple. Because the light will penetrate beyond the tissue surface the light can detect problem areas that are below the visible surface and this early detection is crucial to successful treatment of oral cancer.

The stereotypical oral cancer patient is a black male, 45 years or older, who smokes and drinks, but more and more people of all ethnicities are being diagnosed with oral cancer in their 20's and 30's. Oral cancer is being detected in persons who don't smoke or drink. Science is pointing at Human Papilloma Virus as the cause.

The Velscope examination is very simple and pain-free. I look through the light at all oral tissues, and if something is a little suspicious I will see the patient back in 2 weeks and recheck the area. Almost all these suspicious areas resolve because there was some sort of acute problem that healed itself and that is that. If something is very suspicious or does not resolve in two weeks, I will refer the patient to an Oral Surgeon or Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialist for biopsy and treatment if necessary.

For more information check out: www.velscope.com