

Study on benefits of coffee in preventing oral cancer requires follow-up research, Loyola dentist says

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A recent study from the American Cancer Society purports that heavy coffee drinkers may reduce the risk of dying from mouth and throat cancer by half, but one dentist is not raising a coffee cup in support.

"I do not recommend that my patients drink coffee," said Martin Hogan, DDS, Loyola University Health System. "The study does suggest benefits, but I would like to see more studies done to prove this correlation."

Coffee, along with tea and red wine, is a top cause of damage to [tooth enamel](#).

"As with any study, there are always variables that are not documented, such as alcohol consumption and tobacco use, which are top causes of oral cancer," said Dr. Hogan, who regularly assists in the diagnosis of oral cancer and works with oncological patients at Loyola. According to Hogan, risks for oral/pharyngeal cancers include [alcohol consumption](#), smoking, [chewing tobacco](#), biological factors such as fungi, viruses such as HPV (especially strain 16 for oral cancers) and physical factors including exposure to UV radiation and exposure to X-rays.

Many patients dismiss the early signs of oral cancer and do not report symptoms until the cancer has spread to other parts of the body. "Oral cancer signs range from chronic sores in the mouth that do not heal to difficulty swallowing and many patients do not think they are a big enough deal to seek medical attention," Hogan said .

Common signs of oral/pharyngeal cancer include:

- A sore or lesion in the mouth that does not heal within two weeks
- A lump or thickening in the cheek

- A white or red patch on the gums, tongue, tonsils or lining of the mouth
- A sore throat or a feeling that something is caught in the throat
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Difficulty moving the jaw or tongue
- Numbness of the tongue or other area of the mouth
- Swelling of the jaw that causes dentures to fit poorly or become uncomfortable
- Chronic hoarseness

The growing trend of [sugary drinks](#) also is taking a toll on oral health.

"[Sports drinks](#) and soda are also big offenders of dental disease and actually are less damaging if they are consumed at one sitting as opposed to continuously sipping the drinks over the course of an afternoon," he said. "Sipping prolongs the exposure of the teeth to the sugary and/or acidic liquids and increases the damage to the teeth."

Loyola's Oral Health Center provides full dental services including general dentistry and preventive care for adults and children, and oral and maxillofacial surgery.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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