

Early detection stakeholder kit

Tailor the below Early Detection content to increase support through your networks.

Cancer Council Victoria's Early Detection campaign is supporting Victorians to put cancer screening and early detection back on the agenda. To achieve this, they're working with health professionals across a range of disciplines to address the missing cancers that went undiagnosed during the pandemic.

CCV Early Detection Campaign background

Over the last few years, Victorian's attitudes towards health seeking behaviours have changed. People have changed how they prioritise their health, only seeking help for serious, acute issues and putting off anything they perceive to be non-essential. Insights show that some patients delay or hesitate to book appointments with their doctor to discuss cancer symptoms or for cancer screening as they believe they will not be able to access a health system that is overburdened and that non-urgent issues are not a priority to healthcare providers. These perceptions may be further reinforced when they find it difficult to get an appointment with their usual GP or if they need to wait for longer than they usually would, as well as a noted increase in cost of GP services and reduced availability of bulk billing. Further qualitative research has also identified prevalent beliefs in the Victorian community that telehealth is preferred by GPs rather than face-to-face, and that consultations have been shortened and limited to the presenting issue, with little opportunity to discuss symptoms or raise concerns. This further deters individuals from booking appointments to discuss cancer screening or unexplained symptoms that may be a sign of cancer.

The Victorian Cancer Registry reported a 7% decline in cancer diagnoses in 2020, with diagnoses declining again in 2021 by 4.3%. This represents around 3,800 fewer cancer diagnoses in Victoria over 2020 and 2021 ([VCR Report, 2022](#)). This is likely because the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the number of Victorians coming forward for cancer screening, testing and subsequent diagnoses.

The Victorian Cancer Registry also reported that the greatest decline in cancer diagnoses occurred in bowel cancer (846 fewer diagnoses), melanoma (827), blood cancers (644), prostate cancer (625) and breast cancer (395) ([VCR, 2022](#)).

To address this issue, Cancer Council Victoria is working with a broad range of health professionals to deliver a Victorian Government Department of Health funded Early Detection campaign. The campaign is informed by CCV's Behavioural Insights Research and community consultation which highlighted Victorians need to be reassured by doctors to book appointments for symptoms or cancer screening. It is a critical time to change the narrative after so many significant changes to our health system, to ensure Victorians know they can and should make an appointment to get a symptom checked or to discuss cancer screening. However, we need health professionals to support this message, research showing patients are more likely to participate in cancer screening if advised by their doctor or a health professional.

How you can help

This campaign serves as a reminder for all oral health professionals that early detection saves lives. It is important for oral health professionals to screen their patients for oral cancer.

The Oral Cancer Screening and Prevention Program led by Dental Health Services Victoria with funding from the Department of Health launched the *Oral Cancer Learning Hub* to enhance oral health professionals' ability to identify people at risk, detect cancers of the oral cavity and oropharynx early and refer appropriately.

This website – which was developed in partnership with the University of Melbourne, Australian Dental Association Victoria and La Trobe University - can serve as a valuable tool in supporting oral health professionals to educate patients about oral cancer risk, symptoms and prevention. To learn more, visit <https://www.oralcancerhub.org.au/> or email oralcancervic@dhsv.org.au .

Oral Health Professionals communications

Sample social media for health professional audiences:

Sample post:

When it comes to oral cancers, early detection saves lives. Oral health professionals are urged to do their bit as part of the Cancer Council's Early Detection campaign and talk to your patients about unexplained symptoms or changes in their mouth, and encourage screening. For more information visit [oralcancerhub.org.au#CancerScreening](https://www.oralcancerhub.org.au/#CancerScreening) #EarlyDetection

Newsletter copy for HCP audiences

Title: Prioritising Oral Cancer Screening and Early Detection: A Call to Action for Oral Health Professionals

Over recent years, there has been a noticeable change in people's attitudes towards health checks and health-seeking behaviours, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had an effect on oral cancer diagnoses as well. Oral cancer (including oropharyngeal cancer) is on the rise in Victoria and in an average week, more than 16 people are diagnosed with it.

People over the age of 45 years are at increased risk, as are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people in low-income groups. Older women and younger people who are non-smokers and non-drinkers are emerging at-risk groups.

Smoking, alcohol, tobacco and betel nut use, HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) infection increases the risk of oral cancer. Early detection of oral cancer can save a person's life and prognosis can be significantly improved.

Cancer Council Victoria's Early Detection campaign emphasises that patients are more likely to participate in cancer screening if advised by their doctor or health professional. Oral health professionals play a crucial role in oral cancer screening, prevention and early detection to ensure the best possible outcome for their patients.

Now is the time to reinforce the importance of oral cancer screening and early detection to all patients and encourage them to take proactive steps towards protecting their health.

During patient consultations, highlight the importance of regular oral cancer screenings in detecting potential cancers early and increasing the chances of successful treatment outcomes. Furthermore, it is crucial to educate patients about the common risk factors for oral cancer and the importance of reporting any unexplained changes or symptoms in the mouth (persistent ulcer, lump, sore throat etc.) unhealed for more than 2-3 weeks.

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*Program delivered in partnership with the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University, The Australian Dental Association – Victorian Branch and the Victorian Department of Health.

Consumer facing communications

Sample social media – for consumer-facing channels

Sample post:

Don't ignore unexplained symptoms or changes to your body – and that includes your mouth. Talk to an oral health professional if you've noticed a change. #HealthCheck
#CancerScreening