What are oral cancers?
They are cancers of the inner lip and mouth. Most form from cells in the first tissue layer.

What are cancer stages?
A cancer stage is a rating of the cancer based on test results. Stages for oral cancer range from stage 0 to stage 4. Stage 4 is further grouped by the letters A through C. Doctors write these stages as—stage 0, stage I, stage II, stage III, stage IVA, stage IVB, and stage IVC.

What health care is given before treatment?
- A report of your health history and an exam of your body
- Help for distress or tobacco use, if needed
- An exam of your teeth and mouth by a dentist and maybe by a prosthodontist
- An x-ray of your entire mouth, called a Panorex, if needed
- Detailed images of your mouth, neck, or chest, if needed (ie, CT scan, MRI scan)
- Detailed pictures with PET/CT scan for stage II or IV is an option
- An exam to assess if anesthesia is safe, if needed
- An exam of your throat with a scope, if needed
- Removal of tissue samples to test for cancer
- Help with eating or talking, if needed
### What are the treatment options for early oral cancers?
- Surgery and radiation therapy are options for stages I and II. More treatment may follow to help prevent the cancer from coming back.  

### What are the treatment options for advanced oral cancers?
- For stages III, IVA, and IVB (T1–T4a), surgery is preferred by NCCN experts if it can be done. Another option may be radiation therapy with or without cancer drugs. Or, a clinical trial may be right for you.  
- After treatment, see your cancer doctor often. He or she will assess treatment results. Also, see your dentist, and if needed, get help with talking and eating.  
- If the cancer returns, treatment options partly depend on where the cancer is.  

### What are the treatment options for very advanced oral cancers?
- For stages IVB (T4b) and IVC, treatment options are based on your ability to do activities. Your doctor will rate your ability using a performance scale.  
- For stage IVB (T4b), options include radiation with or without cancer drugs, cancer drugs alone, or care to improve quality of life.  
- For stage IVC, options include cancer drugs and care to improve quality of life. Some cancers may be treated with surgery or radiation if they are small.  

### How can you decide between options?
- Don’t be shy and ask your doctors questions. They are there to help.  
- Get a second opinion. Even doctors get second opinions.  
- Support groups can be helpful. You can learn a lot from others.  
- Compare the pros and cons of each option.