

Paan chewing and its risks to your health

Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery

Information for Patients

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Introduction

The leaflet will help you understand what Paan is and how it can effect your health. If you have any more questions or concerns after reading this leaflet, please ask a member of the surgical team looking after your care.

What is Paan?

The word 'Paan or Pan', is used to describe the use of the Betel plant leaves to wrap different ingredients. These ingredients are believed to be good for breath freshening, digestion and pain relief, by many who use it. Its used mainly by those who live or are from South and south –eastern Asia.

Whilst many know the dangers of tobacco, many do not know about the dangers of Paan.

What is in the Paan quid/wrap?

The Betel leaf by itself is not known to be harmful. The Betel leaf is used to wrap harmful ingredients like:

- Tobacco
- The betel nut
- Lime/processed limestone
- Paan masala and paan parag (sweet version containing various spices)

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Known names/brands include:

- Zarda
- Supari
- Chun
- Manikchand
- Gutkha
- Tulsi
- Mawa
- Smokeless tobacco

What harm can Paan cause?

Paan and products similar to paan are well known to be directly linked to:

- Oral cancer. This is the 9th most common cancer in the UK. 9 out of 10 people who get oral cancer are tobacco users.
- Oesophageal cancer. This is the 13th most common cancer in the UK.
- Coronary artery disease
- Stroke
- Premature and low birth weight
- Still birth
- Oral sub-mucous fibrosis. This is a hardening of the soft tissues in the mouth. This can lead to a person being unable to open their mouth. They may find it difficult to eat certain foods, brush their teeth or have dental treatment because of restricted mouth opening. It can form at any age and at any stage of betel nut/paan use. It cannot be reversed and may lead to oral cancer.
- Staining the teeth, gums and soft tissues of the mouth.
- Can lead to psychosis in some people

Signs of oral cancer

- A non-healing ulcer. Any oral ulcer lasting more than 3 weeks should be checked with your dentist right away. Or see your GP if you do not have a dentist.
- A red/white patch in the mouth.
- Problems swallowing
- Lasting hoarse or croaky voice



- Unexplained loose teeth
- Unexplained weight loss
- Problems opening the mouth
- Pain in the ear, that doesn't improve in a few days

What next?

If you are worried that you have any of the signs listed above, or just want to get help to help quit the habit, contact your dentist or GP right away.

Your dentist or GP may refer you to the maxillofacial unit if they are concerned.

The Maxillofacial team may suggest:

- Clinical check. This is to get a diagnosis confirming sub-mucous fibrosis. They will then use a watch and wait approach.
- A biopsy may be suggested depending what the areas of concern look like. This involves having a local anaesthetic in the area. Once numb, tissue is removed and sent to the lab for diagnosis. Depending on this result, more treatment may be required.
- A referral to the stop smoking service.
- Close follow up appointments may also be offered for a few months up to 5 years or more. This depends on biopsy results and any more treatment that are offered.

Contact details:

Maxillofacial Department:

Reception: **0116 258 5301**

Nurse station: **0116 258 5671**

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