

How is OSF treated?

Firstly, you must stop using betel nut to prevent further damage. This can be very difficult and you may need professional help to stop. Any damage previously caused cannot be reversed.

Regular appointments with your dentist are needed to look for any changes to the mouth.

Good diet and oral hygiene is also important.

Mouth opening exercises and physiotherapy may help to improve the ability to open the mouth.

Medications to help reduce inflammation may be injected or prescribed by your dentist.

In serious cases, surgery may be needed to remove the thickening of the lining of the mouth to help improve jaw opening.

Is OSF linked to cancer?

OSF itself is not cancer, but it does greatly increase the risk of having cancer.

Using betel nut alone is linked to cancers of the:

- Mouth
- Pharynx (throat)
- Oesophagus (food pipe)

Betel Nut and Tobacco

Paan, gutka and bing lang can contain both betel nut & tobacco (shada/zarda). Using betel nut with tobacco & alcohol increases the risk of getting cancer by over 123 times.

It is important to stop smoking and chewing tobacco. This can be difficult to do as tobacco contains nicotine, which is addictive.



Advice to Patients

Oral Submucous Fibrosis



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Oral submucous fibrosis (OSF) is a long-lasting condition that causes inflammation and continuous thickening of the mouth lining.

It is related to chewing areca/betel nut, also called supari. Betel nut is the main ingredient of:

- Paan (also called betel quid)
- Gutka
- Bing lang

OSF increases the risk of developing mouth and throat cancers, as well as other cancers of the digestive system.

Who does OSF affect?

OSF can affect people of any age who use betel nut regularly. The condition affects men and women equally.



What are the symptoms of OSF?

Some patients may have no immediate problems, but they will get worse with time.

The most common sign is red/brown staining of teeth, gums, spit & lining of your mouth. Other symptoms include:

- Pale lining of your mouth
- Soreness/burning of your mouth
- Teeth may wear and begin to look shorter over time

With more time, problems include:

- White/grey areas inside the mouth & on the tongue that may become thick, making it harder to open the mouth
- Jaw pain and difficulty eating and speaking

How is OSF caused?

Betel nut releases chemicals that damage the mouth. These chemicals, including arecoline, cause changes to the cells in the mouth, causing thickening, scarring and tightening of the lining of the mouth.

How is OSF diagnosed?

A good history of how you use betel nut is important, as well as looking at the lining of your mouth.

Blood tests may be needed to rule out other causes of a sore mouth.

A biopsy may be needed, where a small sample of the lining is taken and looked at under a microscope.

