



“Experts divided over mouthwash claims

Claims of a link between antiseptic mouthwash and oral cancer have divided leading dental experts.

A review article published in the current issue of the Dental Journal of Australia concludes there is now "sufficient evidence" that "alcohol-containing mouthwashes contribute to the increased risk of development of oral cancer".

However, Professor Laurence Walsh, head of the School of Dentistry at the University of Queensland on Sunday rejected the claim and said there was no established link between mouthwash and oral cancer.

In a letter to the editors of the journal, Professor Walsh criticised the authors of the paper for drawing on a "small and selective group of studies".

"A wide range of critical and systematic reviews over many years have failed to show any statistically significant association between mouthwash use and oral cancer," he said.

"There is certainly nothing in the current paper to change our thinking in that regard."

According to the article, which is authored by several independent experts, ethanol in mouthwash is thought to allow cancer-causing substances to permeate the lining of the mouth more easily and cause harm.

Acetaldehyde, a toxic by-product of alcohol that may accumulate in the oral cavity when swished around the mouth, is also believed to be carcinogenic.

Mouthwash is one of the fastest-growing grocery products in Australia, with the category now worth more than \$75 million, according to the latest Nielsen market research.

Lead review author Professor Michael McCullough, associate professor of oral medicine at the University of Melbourne, told News Ltd that alcohol-containing mouthwash should be reclassified as prescription-only and carry written health warnings."

Source: January 11, 2009 - 6:21AM The Age Newspaper

makeUwell comment:

As long as the jury of experts is still undecided on this issue, your best bet would be to err on the side of caution. There are numerous oral hygiene products now available that don't have alcohol in them, [find your alcohol-free mouthwash here](#).