
50 FACTS ABOUT ORAL, HEAD AND NECK CANCER

1. “Oral, head and neck cancer” typically refers to squamous cell carcinoma of the tongue, throat, and voice box. However, “head and neck cancer” also refers to other types of cancer that arise in the nasal cavity, sinuses, lips, mouth, thyroid glands, salivary glands, throat, or voice box.
2. Worldwide, over 550,000 new cases of oral, head and neck cancer are diagnosed each year.
3. Approximately 110,000 people are diagnosed with oral, head and neck cancer every year in the United States.
4. Cancers of the head and neck account for six percent of all cancers in the U.S.
5. Sixty-six percent of the time, oral, head and neck cancers will be found as late stage three and four disease.
6. Men are affected about twice as often as women with oral, head and neck cancer.
7. Tobacco and alcohol use are the leading causes of mouth and voice box cancers.
8. Cigarette smoking increases your risk of head and neck cancer by 15 times compared to a non-smoker.
9. People who use both tobacco and alcohol are at greater risk than people who use only one or the other.
10. Oral, head and neck cancer tends to form in the areas where tobacco and/or alcohol use has the most contact. For example, where the cigarette sits on the lip, or where the chewing tobacco is placed in the mouth.
11. Chewing tobacco causes mouth cancer.
12. Annually in the U.S., over 10,000 new cases of oral, head and neck cancer can be attributed to a particular strain of human papillomavirus (HPV).
13. HPV may be related to over half of tonsil cancers.
14. HPV is responsible for the rise in cancers of the oropharynx (tonsils and base of tongue) in younger non-smokers, and is related to oral sex. The more oral sex partners that someone has, the greater the risk of HPV cancer.
15. Over the past 10 years, more young non-smokers have developed HPV-related cancer of the tonsils and tongue base (back of tongue).
16. Caucasians are more likely to develop head and neck cancer, but African Americans are more likely to die from head and neck cancer.
17. A red or white patch in the mouth or a sore throat can be the first signs of cancers of the mouth and throat.
18. Hoarseness or a change in the voice can be the first sign of cancer of the voice box.
19. Signs of oral, head and neck cancer include a sore in your mouth that doesn’t heal; sore throat; lumps or patches in your mouth; trouble swallowing; changes in your voice; and/or a lump in your neck.
20. Most oral cancers form on the lips, tongue, or floor of the mouth. They may also occur inside your cheeks, on your gums, or on the roof of your mouth.
21. Oropharyngeal cancer arises from the part of the mouth further back, toward the throat, and is different from mouth and lip cancer. Oropharyngeal cancer is often related to HPV, and occurs in the

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- tonsils or tongue base. In contrast, oral cancers are in the mouth, and are often caused by tobacco and alcohol use.
22. Most head and neck cancers can be prevented.
 23. Head and neck cancers often spread to the lymph nodes of the neck.
 24. Once cancer is in the lymph nodes, it is more likely to spread throughout the body.
 25. Patients with cancers treated in the early stages may have little post-treatment disfigurement or functional deficit.
 26. It is estimated that approximately \$3.2 billion is spent in the United States each year on treatment of head and neck cancers.
 27. Surgery and radiation therapy are the most common treatments designed to stop the spread of cancer by killing and/or removing the cancerous cells. Chemotherapy may be added in certain situations for advanced disease.
 28. Treatment of head and neck cancers requires the assistance of many different professionals, such as otolaryngology surgeons, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, endocrinologists, dentists, nutritionists, and speech therapists.
 29. About half of throat cancers occur in the larynx (voice box).
 30. Because of the location of head and neck cancer, it often affects breathing, eating, drinking, voice, speaking, and appearance.
 31. Fifty percent of people with head and neck cancers have very advanced cases by the time they first see a doctor.
 32. In the U.S., a new head and neck cancer case is diagnosed every 10 minutes, and a person dies from this disease every 45 minutes.
 33. If an adult has a neck mass that does not go away, a needle biopsy and/or CT scan may be necessary to diagnose the cause.
 34. Red patches in the mouth that are persistent, and do not have an obvious cause, can develop into cancer about 20 to 30 percent of the time. Removal is highly recommended.
 35. In the past two decades, the incidence of thyroid cancer has increased in all races and both sexes.
 36. Thyroid cancers account for over 55,000 new cancers each year in the U.S.
 37. Thyroid cancer is more common in women than in men.
 38. Thyroid cancer can develop in anyone, although there may be a family history or exposure to radiation involved. Salivary gland cancers also do not seem to be related to any particular cause.
 39. Only about one in 20 thyroid nodules are cancerous.
 40. In general, thyroid cancer is one of the least deadly cancers of the head and neck.
 41. The two most common types of thyroid cancer are called papillary carcinoma and follicular carcinoma.
 42. The most common type of cancer in the nasal cavity and paranasal sinuses is squamous cell carcinoma. It makes up a little over a half of the cancers in this area.

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43. Cancers of the nose and sinuses are rare; about 2,000 people develop these cancers every year.
44. Sinus cancer should be considered when someone has frequent nose bleeds, numbness of the cheek, facial swelling, or pain.
45. People who work in environments with dust, glues, formaldehyde, mustard gas, certain heavy metals, and radium are at higher risk for developing nose or sinus cancer.
46. Environmental factors such as exposure to sunlight can cause skin cancer (melanoma), including cancers of the lips.
47. Every year there are about two cases per every 100,000 people of salivary cancer.
48. The average age that salivary cancer is found is 64.
49. There are several different salivary glands found inside and near the mouth. Each gland is made up of several different types of salivary gland cells. Because cancer can start in any of these different types of cells or glands, salivary cancer is not just one disease. There are many different types of salivary gland cancer.
50. Oral Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week[®] (OHANCAW) can be started by anyone, in any town or clinic, and can help educate people on the early diagnosis of these cancers.