

50 Facts about Oral, Head and Neck Cancer

From the Head and Neck Cancer Alliance



1. Oral, Head and Neck Cancer is a cancer that arises in the nasal cavity, sinuses, lips, mouth, thyroid glands, salivary glands, throat or voice box.
2. Tobacco and alcohol use are the leading causes of tongue and voice box cancers.
3. Cancers of the head and neck account for six percent of all malignancies in the United States.
4. Whites currently have the highest incidence rates of head and neck cancers, although the death rate is highest in African Americans.
5. The majority of the time, people are over the age of 40 when Oral, Head and Neck Cancer is discovered.
6. Eighty-five percent of Oral, Head and Neck Cancers are linked to tobacco use. Smoking cigarettes is the major cause of most head and neck cancers. Chewing tobacco has been shown to cause mouth cancer. Human Papillomavirus (HPV) may be related to over half of tonsil cancers.
7. People who use both tobacco and alcohol are at greater risk than people who use them alone.
8. Oral, Head and Neck cancers tend to form in the areas where tobacco/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.
9. Cigarette smoking increases your risk of head and neck cancer by 15 times compared to a non-smoker.
10. Physical factors such as exposure to ultraviolet radiation are factors contributing to cancers of the lips.
11. The incidence of thyroid cancer has increased in all races and in both males and females during the past two decades.
12. Over the past ten years, an increasing number of people with Human Papillomavirus (HPV) who are young, non-smokers have developed Oral, Head and Neck Cancer.
13. Today, about 10,000 new cases of Oral, Head and Neck Cancer can be attributed to a particular strain of HPV.
14. Oral, Head and Neck Cancer is the sixth most common cancer in the United States.
15. Oral cancers will be found as late stage three and four diseases 66% of the time.
16. Men are affected about twice as often as women with oral cancer.
17. Around 40,000 people are diagnosed with Oral, Head and Neck Cancer every year in the United States.

18. Worldwide, more than 400,000 new cases of Oral, Head and Neck cancer are diagnosed each year.
19. Signs of Oral, Head and Neck Cancer: a sore in your mouth that doesn't heal, constant pain in your mouth, lumps or patches in your mouth, pain around your teeth, changes in your voice, and a lump in your neck.
20. Most oral cancers form on the lips, tongue or floor of the mouth. They also may happen inside your cheeks, on your gums or on the roof of your mouth.
21. Most head and neck cancers can be prevented.
22. Head and neck cancers often spread to the lymph nodes of the neck.
23. It is estimated that approximately \$3.2 billion is spent in the United States each year on treatment of head and neck cancers.
24. Surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy are the most common treatments designed to stop the spread of cancer by killing and/or removing the cancerous cells.
25. Treatment of head and neck cancers requires the assistance of many different professionals, including surgeons, radiation oncologists, chemotherapy oncologists, dentists, nutritionists and speech therapists.
26. About half of throat cancers occur in the larynx (voice box), while the other half occur in the pharynx (throat).
27. The presence of acid reflux disease could also be a major factor in throat cancer. In the case of acid reflux disease, acids flow up into the esophagus, and damage its lining, making it more at risk to throat cancer.
28. Because of the location of head and neck cancer, it often affects breathing, eating, voice, speaking and appearance.
29. Fifty percent of people with head and neck cancers have very advanced cases by the time they first see a doctor.
30. South Carolina is second in the United States in deaths from head and neck cancer.
31. White patches in the mouth that will not rub off develop into about 4-18% of cancers.
32. Red patches in the mouth that are persistent, and do not have an obvious cause can develop into cancer about 20-30% of the time. Removal is highly recommended.
33. Thyroid cancer can develop in anyone, although there often is a family history or exposure to radiation involved. Salivary glands also do not seem to be related to any particular cause.
34. Only about 1 in 20 thyroid nodules are cancerous.
35. The two most common types of thyroid cancer are called papillary carcinoma and follicular carcinoma.
36. Thyroid cancer is more common in women than in men.
37. In general, thyroid cancer is one of the least deadly cancers of the head and neck.
38. 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.
39. Cancers of the nasal and paranasal cancers are rare; about 2,000 people develop these cancers every year.
40. Men are about 50% more likely to get nasal and paranasal cancer than women.

41. People who work in environments with dust, glues, formaldehyde, mustard gas and radium are at higher risk for developing nasal and paranasal cancer.
42. Salivary cancer is not just one disease. There are several different glands found inside and near the mouth.
43. Several types of cancers can start in the salivary glands.
44. Every year there are about two cases of salivary cancer per every 100,000 people.
45. The average age that salivary cancer is found is 64.
46. Once cancer is in the lymph nodes, it is more likely to spread into the soft tissues.
47. Patients with cancers treated in the early stages may have little post treatment disfigurement.
48. Regular check-ups can detect the early stages of oral cancer or conditions that may lead to oral cancer.
49. If cancer is diagnosed, your doctor must then determine at what stage (extent) your cancer is, and the best method of treatment.
50. It is important to maintain a healthy diet, high in fruit and vegetables, and receive screenings regularly to lower your chance of developing Oral, Head and Neck cancer.