

# **50 Facts about Oral, Head and Neck Cancer**

1. Oral, Head and Neck Cancer most commonly refers to squamous cell carcinoma of the tongue, throat, and voice box. However, often, head and neck cancer also refers to other types of cancer that arises in the nasal cavity, sinuses, lips, mouth, thyroid glands, salivary glands, throat, or voice box.
2. HPV or human papillomavirus appears to be responsible for the rise in cancers of the oropharynx (tonsil and base of tongue) in younger nonsmokers and is related to oral sex.
3. Tobacco and alcohol use are the leading causes of mouth and voice box cancers.
4. Cancers of the head and neck account for 6 percent of all malignancies in the United States.
5. Caucasians currently have the highest incidence rates of head and neck cancers, although death is still highest in African Americans.
6. Tobacco (including smokeless tobacco) and alcohol use are very important risk factors for oral, head and neck cancers, particularly those of the tongue, mouth, throat and voice box. Chewing tobacco has been shown to cause mouth cancer. Human Papilloma Virus may be related to over half of tonsil cancers.
7. Cigarette smoking increases your risk of head and neck cancer by 15 times compared to a non-smoker.
8. People who use both tobacco and alcohol are at greater risk than people who use them alone.
9. 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.
10. Environmental factors such as exposure to sunlight can cause skin cancer, melanoma including cancers of the lips.
11. A red or white patch in the mouth or a sore throat can be the first signs of cancers of the mouth and throat
12. Hoarseness or a change in the voice can be the first sign of cancer of the voice box.
13. The incidence of thyroid cancer has increased in all races and in both males and females in the past two decades.
14. Thyroid cancers account for over 55,000 new cancers each year in the US.
15. Over the past ten years, an increasing number of people with Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) who were young, non-smokers have developed cancer of the tonsils and back of the tongue (tongue base).
16. Annually in the US, over 10,000 new cases of Oral, Head and Neck Cancer can be attributed to a particular strain of HPV.
17. 66% of the time, oral cancers will be found as late stage three and four diseases.
18. Men are affected about twice as often as women with oral cancer.
19. Approximately 50,000 people are diagnosed with Oral, Head and Neck Cancer every year in the United States. Over 100,000 when you include thyroid cancer.
20. Worldwide, over 550,000 new cases of Oral, Head and Neck cancer are diagnosed each year.
21. Signs of Oral, Head and Neck Cancer: a sore in your mouth that doesn't heal, sore throat, lumps or patches in your mouth, trouble swallowing, changes in your voice, and a lump in your neck.
22. 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.

23. Oropharyngeal cancer is different from oral cancer. Oropharyngeal cancers are related to HPV usually and occur in the tonsil or base of tongue while oral cancers are in the mouth and usually caused by tobacco use.
24. Most head and neck cancers can be prevented.
25. Head and neck cancers often spread to the lymph nodes of the neck.
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 as an adjunct in certain situations for advanced disease.
28. Treatment of head and neck cancers requires the assistance of many different professionals, such as surgeons, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, 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. 50% of people with head and neck cancers have very advanced cases by the time they first see a doctor.
32. In the US, 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 CAT 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 20-30% of the time. Removal is highly recommended.
35. 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.
36. Only about 1 in 20 thyroid nodules are cancerous.
37. The two most common types of thyroid cancer are called papillary carcinoma and follicular carcinoma.
38. Thyroid cancer is more common in women than in men.
39. In general, thyroid cancer is one of the least deadly cancers of the head and neck.
40. 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.
41. Cancers of the nasal and paranasal cancers are rare; about 2,000 people develop these cancers every year.
42. Sinus cancer should be considered when someone has constant nose bleeds, numbness of the cheek, facial swelling or pain.
43. People who work in environments with dust, glues, formaldehyde, mustard gas, certain heavy metals, and radium are at higher risk for developing nasal and paranasal cancer.
44. Salivary cancer is not just one disease. There are several different glands found inside and near the mouth.
45. Several types of cancers can start in the salivary glands.
46. Every year there are about 2 cases per every 100,000 people of salivary cancer.
47. The average age that salivary cancer is found is 64.
48. Once cancer is in the lymph nodes, it is more likely to spread throughout the body.
49. Patients with cancers treated in the early stages may have little post treatment disfigurement.
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.