

Oral, Head and Neck Cancers

Basic Facts

- Oral, head and neck cancers are the sixth most common cancer in the United States. Oral, head and neck cancers arises in the nasal cavity, sinuses, lips, mouth, thyroid glands, salivary glands, throat, or voice box.
- The majority of the time, people are over the age of 40 when oral, head and neck cancer is discovered. Men are affected about twice as often as women with oral cancer.
- Cancers of the head and neck account for 6 percent of all malignancies in the United States.
- Around 50,000 people are diagnosed with oral, head and neck cancers every year in the United States. A new head and neck cancer case is diagnosed every 10 minutes and a person dies from this disease every 45 minutes.
- Whites currently have the highest incidence rates of head and neck cancers, although death is still highest in African Americans.
- Worldwide, over 550,000 new cases of oral, head and neck cancers are diagnosed each year.
- It is estimated that approximately \$3.2 billion is spent in the United States each year on treatment of head and neck cancers.

Causes

- Most head and neck cancers can be prevented.
- 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 Papilloma Virus (HPV) may be related to over half of tonsil cancers.
- Cigarette smoking increases your risk of head and neck cancer by 15 times compared to a non-smoker.
- People who use both tobacco and alcohol are at greater risk than people who use them alone.
- 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.

- 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.
- Physical factors such as exposure to ultraviolet radiation are factors contributing to cancers of the lips.
- Over the past ten years, an increasing number of people HPV who were young, non-smokers have developed oral, head and neck cancer.
- Today, about 10,000 new cases of oral, head and neck cancer can be attributed to a particular strain of HPV.

Symptoms

- 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.
- 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.
- Head and neck cancers often spread to the lymph nodes of the neck. Once cancer is in the lymph nodes, it is more likely to spread into the soft tissues.
- White patches in the mouth that will not rub off develop into about 4-18% of cancers.
- 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.

Common Types

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.
- ✚ In general, thyroid cancer is one of the least deadly cancers of the head and neck. Only about 1 in 20 thyroid nodules are cancerous.
- ✚ Although thyroid cancer is more common in women than in men, the incidence of thyroid cancer has increased in all races and in both males and females in the past two decades.

- ✚ The two most common types of thyroid cancer are called papillary carcinoma and follicular carcinoma.

Nasal and paranasal region cancers

- ✚ Are rare; about 2000 people develop these cancers every year.
- ✚ Men are about 50% more likely to get nasal and paranasal cancer than women.
- ✚ 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.
- ✚ People who work in environments with dust, glues, formaldehyde, mustard gas, and radium are at higher risk for developing nasal and paranasal cancer.

Salivary cancer

- ✚ Is not just one disease. There are several different glands found inside and near the mouth. Several types of cancers can start in the salivary glands.
- ✚ Every year there are about 2 cases per every 100,000 people of salivary cancer.
- ✚ The average age that salivary cancer is found is 64.

Throat cancer

- ✚ About half occur in the larynx (voice box); while the other half, occur in the pharynx (throat).
- ✚ Tobacco and alcohol use are the leading causes of tongue and voice box cancers.

Treatment

- Regular check-ups can detect the early stages of oral cancer or conditions that may lead to oral cancer. Patients with cancers treated in the early stages may have little post treatment disfigurement.
- 50% of people with head and neck cancers have very advanced cases by the time they first see a doctor. 66% of the time, oral cancers will be found as late stage three and four.
- If cancer is diagnosed, your doctor must then determine at what stage (extent) your cancer is, and the best method of treatment.
- 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.
- Because of the location of head and neck cancer, it often affects breathing,

eating, voice, speaking, and appearance.

- ➔ Treatment of head and neck cancers requires the assistance of many different professionals, such as surgeons, radiation oncologists, chemotherapy oncologists, dentists, nutritionists, and speech therapists.

Prevention

- ✓ Regular check-ups can detect the early stages of oral cancer or conditions that may lead to oral cancer. Patients with cancers treated in the early stages may have little post treatment disfigurement.
- ✓ 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 cancers.
- ✓ **Avoid all tobacco products.**

50 Facts about Oral, Head & Neck Cancer
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