

# Head and Neck Cancer:

## Know Your Risks and Symptoms

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

The risk of getting head and neck cancer increases after age 40. While smoking is the number one risk factor, people who use both tobacco and alcohol are many times more likely to get head and neck cancer than people with neither habit. Other risk factors

include poor oral and dental hygiene and a diet low in vitamins A and B. Hoarseness and voice changes can be a sign of cancer; see your doctor if they do not improve within two weeks. Head and neck cancers can also start away from the vocal cords and produce other symptoms. The most common is swelling or a sore that does not heal. Other symptoms include:

- Persistent sore throat
- Constant coughing
- Pain/difficulty chewing, swallowing, or moving jaw or tongue
- Ear pain/infection
- Trouble breathing
- A lump, bump, or mass in head or neck
- A red or white patch in the mouth
- Foul mouth odor not explained by hygiene
- Persistent nasal obstruction/congestion
- Frequent nosebleeds and/or unusual discharge
- Double vision
- Numbness/weakness in the head and neck region

- Blood in saliva or phlegm
- Loosening teeth
- Dentures no longer fit
- Unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue

### Did You Know?

Head and neck cancers are divided into five main types:

1. Laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancers occur in and around the voice box.
2. Nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancers occur behind the nose.
3. Nasopharyngeal cancers occur at the upper part of the throat behind the nose.
4. Oral and oropharyngeal cancers occur in the mouth, tongue, and the area from tonsils to voice box.
5. Salivary gland cancers occur in the mouth glands that produce saliva.

### The HPV Connection

Human papillomavirus (HPV), the most common sexually transmitted virus in the US, has been playing an increasing role in head and neck cancers. This discovery was made by researchers at The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA).

TCGA researchers studied 279 head and neck cancer tumors and found that more than 70% had specific gene alterations, for which therapies are either available or in development. They also found similarities to other cancers and clues to drug resistance.

About 25 percent of head and neck cancers have been linked to HPV infection, but researchers have seen a rapid increase in these HPV-related cancers, especially in oropharyngeal tumors. There are vaccines available to protect you from the HPV strains that cause head and neck cancer.

"While many head and neck cancers are preventable, they are increasingly common throughout the world, and often challenging to effectively treat over the long term," says Harold Varmus, MD, director of the National Cancer Institute. "This type of broad analysis provides important new clues for future research and treatment directions."

**65,630**

New diagnoses of head and neck cancer in the US estimated for 2020

**85%**

Percent of head and neck cancers linked to tobacco use

**65 or older**

Age at which over half of laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancers are first diagnosed.

**2-3%**

Rate per year at which new cases of laryngeal cancer are falling, most likely because fewer people are smoking.

### Join Us in The Villages and Lecanto!

RBOI's next Look Good Feel Better workshops occur on Monday, April 13, 2-4 PM at 1540 Clemente Ct in Lady Lake and on Monday, April 20, 2-4 PM at 522 N Lecanto Hwy in Lecanto. This free workshop is offered to women undergoing cancer treatment. Trained and certified beauty professionals give lessons on skin and nail care, cosmetics, wigs and turbans, and accessories and styling. Registration is required. Visit [www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org](http://www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org) and look for the Program Finder. Call Wendy Hall at 352-527-0106 or Amy Roberts at 352-732-0277 with any questions.

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