



# Head & Neck Cancer: Cut Your Risk

PAID PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

Smoking (including secondhand smoke and smokeless tobacco, sometimes called “chewing tobacco” or “snuff”) is the number one risk factor for getting head and neck cancer. And people who use both tobacco and alcohol are many times more likely to get head and neck cancer than people with neither habit. Research has also shown that continued smoking by a patient with head and neck cancer may reduce the effectiveness of treatment and increase the chance of a second primary cancer.

RBOI is a member of the Tobacco Free Florida Partnership of Marion County. We support efforts to create tobacco-free environments and smoking cessation and prevention programs, especially those targeted to our youth. Wendy Hall, a Licensed Clinical Social

Worker and Cancer Navigator at RBOI, is also a tobacco cessation specialist. Call her at 352-527-0106 for more information.

## Know Your Symptoms

Hoarseness and voice changes can be a sign of head and neck 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

## 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.”

### by the numbers

**54,010**

Estimated new diagnoses of head and neck cancers in the US, annually

**+0.9%**

Average annual increase in new oral cavity and pharynx cancer cases from 2009-2018

**2x**

Head and neck cancers are twice as common in men versus women

**2.8%**

New cancer cases diagnosed in the US are head and neck



## Did You Know?

Head and neck cancers are divided into five main types:

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

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