



## HEAD & NECK CANCER AWARENESS MONTH APRIL 2026 | QUICK FACTS

- Head and neck cancers are a category of cancers that can form in the oral cavity, throat, voice box, salivary glands, paranasal sinuses and nasal cavity. They usually begin in the squamous cells that line these mucosal surfaces of the head and neck.
- About 4% of cancers diagnosed in the U.S. are head and neck cancers, and incidence is increasing. This year an estimated 60,480 people will be diagnosed with cancers of the oral cavity and pharynx (the mouth and throat), and more will be diagnosed with other cancers of the head and neck.
- HPV, or human papillomavirus, is a risk factor for oropharyngeal cancers—those of the tonsils or base of the tongue—and HPV now is the likely cause of [70% of oropharyngeal cancers](#), and the number of HPV-related oropharyngeal cancers outpaces new cases of HPV-caused cervical cancers.
- Alcohol and tobacco use are the leading causes of head and neck cancers in the mouth and voice box, including smokeless and smoked tobacco and secondhand smoke exposure.
- People can reduce their risk of head and neck cancers by avoiding or quitting tobacco use, and limiting or quitting alcohol use. For those under 26 years of age, HPV vaccination can prevent up to 70% of oropharyngeal cancers.
- Men are almost [three times more likely](#) to be diagnosed with head and neck cancer than women, and those over 50 are more likely to be diagnosed than younger people.
- Other causes of head and neck cancers include: occupational exposure such as with wood dust, asbestos or other industrial and construction dusts; radiation exposure; use of paan or betel quid; Epstein-Barr virus infection; Asian ancestry, especially Chinese ancestry; and some underlying genetic disorders.

### RESOURCES

- National Cancer Institute: <https://www.cancer.gov/types/head-and-neck/head-neck-fact-sheet>
- Head and Neck Cancer Alliance: <https://www.headandneck.org/>
- HPV Free NV: <https://www.hpvfreenv.org>
- American Cancer Society: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/head-neck-cancer.html>
- Oral Cancer Foundation: <https://oralcancerfoundation.org/>
- Survivor Stories:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWYqirykEzM>
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edhx\\_BEX7hc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edhx_BEX7hc)