

# RECOGNISING HEAD AND NECK CANCER



Head and Neck Cancer (HNC) often goes unrecognised at an early stage, which has devastating impacts on patient outcomes. Helping your patients to seek earlier medical advice can save lives.

**3** If your patient displays **ONE** of the following symptoms for **THREE** weeks, it is imperative to refer them and seek diagnosis:



Sore tongue, non-healing mouth ulcers and/or red or white patches in the mouth



Pain in the throat



Persistent hoarseness



Painful and/or difficulty swallowing



Lump in the neck



Blocked nose on one side and/or bloody discharge from the nose



## HNC prevalence in the UK

- HNC is the 16th most common cause of cancer death in the UK. In 2015, **62,000+** people were living with HNC in the UK.<sup>1,2</sup>
- **30%** of head and neck cancer deaths in the UK are in females, and **70%** are in males.<sup>3</sup>
- Mortality rates for head and neck cancer in the UK can rise steadily from age **40+**. If your patient is a smoker, drinks alcohol or has human papillomavirus (HPV) they may be at further risk.<sup>4,5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cancer Research UK. Head and Neck Cancer Statistics. Available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/head-and-neck-cancers>. Last accessed: September 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Macmillan.Org. The Rich Picture: People with Head and Neck Cancer. Available at: [https://www.macmillan.org.uk/\\_images/Head-Neck-Cancer\\_tcm9-282784.pdf](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/_images/Head-Neck-Cancer_tcm9-282784.pdf). Last accessed: September 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Cancer Research UK. Head and neck cancer by sex and UK country. Available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/head-and-neck-cancers/incidence#heading-Zero>. Last accessed: September 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Cancer Research UK. Head and neck cancer incidence by age. Available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/head-and-neck-cancers/incidence#heading-One>. Last accessed: September 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Cancer Research UK. Head and neck cancers risk. Available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/head-and-neck-cancers/risk-factors>. Last accessed: September 2021.

## Patient prognosis

**60%** of people with head and neck cancer present with locally advanced disease at diagnosis<sup>6</sup>

**66%** of people diagnosed with locally advanced head and neck cancer die from the disease within five years<sup>7</sup>

There is an **80-90%** survival rate for patients diagnosed and treated early<sup>8</sup>

## Recognising head and neck cancer signs and symptoms saves lives.



In the UK, **46–88%** cases of HNC are preventable<sup>1</sup>



If you can recognise the signs of HNC, you will **play a role in helping patients to receive earlier diagnosis**, thereby increasing their chances of survival



**Print this resource** and share with colleagues or around your practice to raise awareness

<sup>6</sup> Vermorken JB, et al. Ann Oncol 2010;21(Suppl 7):vi252–61.  
<sup>7</sup> Gatta et al. Eur J Cancer. 2015 Oct;51(15):2130-2143.

<sup>8</sup> MSD Manual. Overview of Head and Neck Tumors. Available at: <https://www.msmanuals.com/en-nz/professional/ear-nose-and-throat-disorders/tumors-of-the-head-and-neck/overview-of-head-and-neck-tumors>. Last accessed: September 2021.

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