



# MAKE SENSE OF HEAD AND NECK CANCER

In Europe, head and neck cancer accounts for approximately 4% of all cancers and is the 6<sup>th</sup> most common type of cancer.<sup>1</sup>

**make it** **make sense**

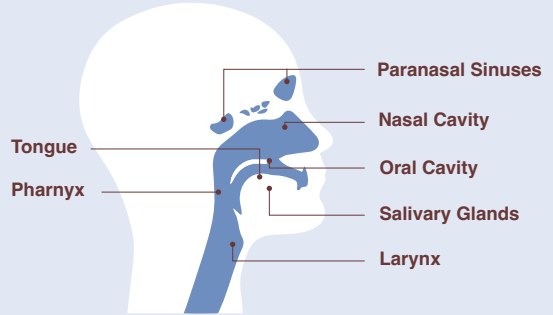
Learn the life-saving 1for3 rule

 **MAKESENSECAMPAIGN**

## WHAT IS HEAD AND NECK CANCER?

Head and neck cancer is a way of describing any cancer that is found in the head or neck region, except in the eyes, brain, ears, thyroid or oesophagus.

More than 90% of the cancers begin in the mucosal cells that line the moist surfaces inside the head and neck (for example: inside the mouth, the nose and the throat).<sup>2,3</sup>



## HOW COMMON IS HEAD AND NECK CANCER?

In 2020, there were approximately 168,000 new cases of head and neck cancer diagnosed in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Head and neck cancer is the 8th most common cause of cancer death in Europe, with approximately 73,000 deaths in 2020.<sup>4</sup>

In Europe in 2020, the most common areas for new cases of head and neck cancer to occur were:

- Oral cavity (39%)
- Pharynx (32%)
- Larynx (24%)

## WHAT IS THE PROGNOSIS?

Head and neck cancer often goes unrecognised at an early stage, which can have devastating impacts on patient outcomes. Earlier presentation, diagnosis and referral could improve the chances of survival.

Approximately **60%** of all head and neck cancers are diagnosed at the advanced stage...<sup>5</sup>

...of these **66%** will not be alive after 5 years...<sup>6</sup>

...yet if diagnosed and treated in the early stages,

**80-90%** will survive.<sup>7</sup>...

If you have any **ONE** of the following symptoms for **THREE** weeks, seek medical advice:



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

## WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?



Smoking

A person who smokes will be **10 times** more likely to develop head and neck cancer than a non-smoker.<sup>8</sup> **70-80%** of head and neck cancers are linked to tobacco use.<sup>9</sup> Alcohol plus tobacco increases the risk further.



Alcohol

Frequent and heavy alcohol consumption raises the risk of developing cancer in the mouth, pharynx, larynx.<sup>9</sup>



Gender

Men are 2 to 3 times more likely than women to develop head and neck cancer. However, the rate of head and neck cancer in women has been rising for several decades.<sup>9</sup>



Age

Head and neck cancer incidence is strongly related to age, with the highest incidence rates being in older people.<sup>10</sup> Head and neck cancer is most common in people over the age of 40.<sup>9</sup>



Human Papillomavirus (HPV)

Infection with HPV can increase the risk of developing particular types head and neck cancer, including cancers in the throat, tongue and tonsil.<sup>11</sup> Patients with HPV-related head and neck cancer are generally younger, in good health, and may not have a typical history of tobacco and/or alcohol abuse. HPV can be prevented by vaccination.

# PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF HEAD AND NECK CANCER

A 2020 survey of the general public across 5 European countries found that 73% of respondents did not confidently know head and neck cancer symptoms, and 38% had not even heard of the disease.<sup>12</sup> These results demonstrate there is a critical need to continue to raise awareness of head and neck cancer.

In fact, the incidence of head and neck cancer continues to increase. By 2030, it is estimated that the number of new cases of head and neck cancer will increase by more than 200,000 and that a further 587,000 people will die from head and neck cancer worldwide.<sup>13,14</sup>

## Reference

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# WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT HEAD AND NECK CANCER?

In the vast majority of cases, head and neck cancer is a preventable disease.<sup>15</sup> This is why it is vital to stay head and neck cancer aware and learn the life-saving 1for3 rule — early referral and diagnosis saves lives.

To stay aware of head and neck cancer, you can:



Learn the 1for3 rule



Share this leaflet with others who may be at high risk



Support gender neutral HPV vaccination programmes



Follow the *Make Sense* Campaign online [makesensecampaign.eu](https://makesensecampaign.eu)

**If you are worried about head and neck cancer, speak to your doctor or dentist as soon as possible.**