



TIP SHEET Oral & Oropharyngeal Cancer

What You Should Know

Head & neck cancers include *oral* and *oropharyngeal* cancer.

- **Oral cancer** occurs on the lips and inside the mouth, on the tongue, gums, lining of the cheeks, bottom or roof of the mouth, and the small area behind the wisdom teeth.
- **Oropharyngeal cancer** occurs on the tonsils and at the *back* of the mouth, tongue, and roof of the mouth, along with the side and back walls of the throat.

How Common Are These Cancers in the U.S.?

Approximately 46,000 new cases of oral and oropharyngeal cancer are diagnosed in the United States each year. They are the 8th most common cancers among men.

A growing number of oral cancers have been linked to the human papilloma virus (HPV), a sexually transmitted disease that can be passed on during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention notes that “nearly all sexually active men and women get it at some point in their lives.”

Screening

You should have a routine exam for oral and oropharyngeal cancer as part of your regular dental or medical check-up. If you have any of the risk factors for oral or oropharyngeal cancer, read about Roswell Park’s **high-risk screening program** on the other side of this sheet.

Symptoms to Tell Your Dentist or Doctor

- Ulcers or sores in the mouth that do not heal
- Persistent bleeding, pain or numbness in the mouth
- Lumps on the tongue or gums
- Loose teeth
- Ear pain
- Lump in the neck
- Difficulty moving the tongue or jaw
- Persistent bad breath
- Pain when you swallow

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

- **Tobacco Use** — cigarettes, cigars, pipes (even low-tar or low-nicotine products) and chewing tobacco
- **Heavy use of alcohol** — beer, wine, hard liquor
- **People who smoke and drink heavily** are at much greater risk for oral and oropharyngeal cancer.
- Infection with the **Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)**, a very common sexually transmitted disease that usually does not cause symptoms



Learn more at
www.cdc.gov/std/hpv/stdfact-hpv.htm

Meet the Doctors

Head & Neck Surgery



Wesley L. Hicks, Jr., MD, FACS



Hassan Arshad, MD



David Cohan, MD



Vishal Gupta, MD



Moni Abraham Kuriakose, MD, FRCS

Dentistry



Philip Williams, DDS

Radiation Oncology



Anurag Singh, MD

Why Roswell Park Cancer Institute?

The RPCI team includes surgical, medical, and radiation oncologists (cancer specialists), plus dental oncologists, plastic & reconstructive surgeons, speech pathologists, nutritionists, and other experts who work together to provide the very best care — *all in one location*.

We offer **minimally invasive Trans-Oral Robotic Surgery (TORS)**, which has been shown to reduce the need for traditional “open” surgery, reduce pain after surgery, and shorten recovery time.

Some patients may be eligible for **photodynamic therapy (PDT)**, a treatment developed at RPCI that uses laser light to activate nontoxic compounds. PDT kills cancer cells, activates the immune system, and shuts down the growth of new blood vessels that could “feed” tumors.

High-Risk Screening Program

Two-thirds of patients with oral and oropharyngeal cancer do not find out they have the disease until it is in the advanced stages. RPCI’s screening program for high-risk patients is designed to catch it earlier, when it’s easier to treat. Find out if you’re eligible: Call 1-877-ASK-RPCI (1-877-275-7724).

Oral and oropharyngeal cancers occur mostly in people over age

55,

but can affect younger people.



Roswell Park’s High-Risk Oral Cancer Screening Program uses blue fluorescent light and other advanced imaging tools to find abnormal areas in the mouth before they are large enough to be seen by normal white light.



QUIT SMOKING? YES, YOU CAN!

Call the **New York State Smokers’ Quitline** at **1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487)** or visit www.nysmokefree.com for free information, support and cessation aids.