



Oral and Oropharyngeal (back of mouth) Cancers Are on the Rise in Canada

The Canadian Cancer Society estimated in 2022 that¹:

- Approximately 7,500 Canadians would be diagnosed with head and neck cancer
- Approximately 2,100 Canadians would die of head and neck cancer
- Approximately twice as many men as women would be diagnosed with head and neck cancer

Reduce Your Risks

- Limit alcohol consumption to 2 or fewer standard drinks per week; follow Canada's updated guidelines for safe alcohol consumption.²
- Do not use tobacco or vaping products. Your dental hygienist can help you quit by offering tobacco cessation strategies during your next appointment.
- Protect yourself from human papillomavirus (HPV) infections by getting vaccinated. HPV DNA has been identified in two-thirds of oropharyngeal cancers. Vaccination is your greatest defence!
- Protect your lips from the sun by limiting exposure and wearing SPF-containing lip balm when outside.
- Make healthy food choices. Consult *Canada's Food Guide* for more information.³
- Visit your dental hygienist regularly. Dental hygienists can recognize abnormal tissue changes and will refer you to a specialist for follow-up. Oral and oropharyngeal cancers, if caught early, can be treated.

Signs and Symptoms

- Changes to the colour of your gums, cheeks or tongue
- Mouth lumps, bumps or sores that do not heal within 14 days
- Persistent sore throat or cough or a change in your voice
- Difficulty swallowing or a feeling that something is stuck in your throat
- Lumps in the neck (even those that don't bother you)
- Mouth or ear pain in combination with any of the other symptoms listed

References

1. Canadian Cancer Society. Head and Neck Cancer Statistics [Internet]. Reviewed May 2022. Available from: cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/oral/statistics
2. Paradis C, Butt P, Shield K, Poole N, Wells S, Naimi T, Sherk A, and the Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines Scientific Expert Panels. *Canada's guidance on alcohol and health: final report*. Ottawa (ON): Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction; 2023.
3. Government of Canada. Canada's Food Guide [Internet]. Reviewed June 2023. Available from: food-guide.canada.ca/en/



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