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[Laryngeal and Hypopharyngeal Cancer - Risk Factors and Prevention](#) [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 10/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of developing these types of cancer and what people can do to lower their risk. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

A risk factor is anything that increases a person's chance of developing cancer. Although risk factors often influence the development of cancer, most do not directly cause cancer. Some people with several risk factors never develop cancer, while others with no known risk factors do. However, knowing your risk factors and talking about them with your doctor may help you make more informed lifestyle and health care choices.

These two factors greatly increase the risk of developing laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer:

- **Tobacco.** Use of [tobacco](#) [3], including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco, and snuff, is the single largest risk factor for head and neck cancer. Eighty-five percent (85%) of head and neck cancer is linked to tobacco use. [Secondhand smoke](#) [4] may also increase a person's risk.
- **Alcohol.** Frequent and heavy consumption of [alcohol](#) [5] increases the risk of both laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer. Using tobacco and alcohol together increases this risk even more.

Other factors that can raise a person's risk of developing laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer include:

- **Gender.** Men are four to five times more likely than women to develop laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer.
- **Age.** People over 55 are at higher risk, although younger people may also develop these types of cancer.
- **Race.** Black and white people are more likely to develop laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer than Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans.
- **Occupational inhalants.** Exposure to asbestos, wood dust, paint fumes, and certain chemicals may increase a person's risk of developing laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer.
- **Poor nutrition.** A diet low in vitamins A and E can raise a person's risk of laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer. Foods that are rich in these vitamins may help prevent the disease.
- **Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).** Chronic reflux of stomach acid into the larynx and pharynx may be associated with laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer. However, no specific causal relationship has been shown. This may or may not be associated with the symptoms of heartburn.
- **Plummer-Vinson syndrome.** This rare condition involves iron deficiency and causes difficulty swallowing. The presence of this disease increases the risk of hypopharyngeal cancer.
- **Poor oral hygiene.** Poor care of one's teeth by not brushing regularly and using dental floss, can increase the risk of head and neck cancer. Dental checkups twice each year are recommended for all people at risk for these types of cancer.

Prevention

Different factors cause different types of cancer. Researchers continue to look into what factors cause these types of cancer. Although there is no proven way to completely prevent this

disease, you may be able to lower your risk. [Stopping the use of tobacco products](#) [6] is the most important thing a person can do, even for people who have been smoking for many years. Talk with your doctor for more information about your personal risk of cancer.

The [next section in this guide is Screening](#) [7], and it explains how tests may find cancer before signs or symptoms appear. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/laryngeal-and-hypopharyngeal-cancer/risk-factors-and-prevention>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25002>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25004>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24981>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25003>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/34326>