

[Salivary Gland Cancer - Risk Factors](#) [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of developing this type of cancer. 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.

The cause(s) of most salivary gland cancers are unknown, but the following factors may raise a person's risk of developing salivary gland cancer:

- **Age.** Two out of every three salivary gland cancers are found in people 55 and older, with an average age of 64.
- **Radiation exposure.** Radiation therapy to the head or neck for another medical reason may increase the risk of developing salivary gland cancer.
- **Radioactive substance exposure.** In some reports, exposure to certain radioactive substances has been linked to an increased risk of salivary gland cancer. In other reports, there has not been enough evidence to support this. Talk with your doctor for more information.

- **Environmental/occupational exposure.** Exposure to sawdust and chemicals used in the leather industry, pesticides, and some industrial solvents may increase the risk of a type of salivary gland cancer that occurs in the nose and sinuses.

Researchers continue to look into what factors cause this type of cancer. Other possible risk factors that doctors are investigating, but have not proven, include exposure to certain metals (nickel alloy dust) or minerals (silica dust), a diet low in vegetables and high in animal fats, and exposure to hair dye or hairspray. Talk with your doctor for more information about your personal risk of cancer and how you may be able to lower your risk.

The [next section in this guide is Screening](#) [3], 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/salivary-gland-cancer/risk-factors>

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/33931>