

[Neuroendocrine Tumor - Risk Factors](#) [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 04/2014

ON THIS PAGE: You will find out more about the factors that increase the chance of developing this type of tumor. 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 a tumor. Although risk factors often influence the development of a neuroendocrine tumor, most do not directly cause it. Some people with several risk factors never develop a tumor, 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 following factors can raise a person's risk of developing a neuroendocrine tumor:

Age. Pheochromocytoma is most common between the ages of 40 and 60. Merkel cell cancer is most common in people older than 70.

Gender. Men are more likely to develop pheochromocytoma than women. For every two women who develop pheochromocytoma, three men will develop the disease. Men are also more likely to develop Merkel cell cancer than women.

Race/ethnicity. White people are most likely to develop Merkel cell cancer; however, some black people and people of Polynesian descent have developed the disease.

Family history. Ten percent (10%) of pheochromocytomas are linked to hereditary causes. [Multiple endocrine neoplasia type 1 \(MEN1\)](#) [3] is a hereditary condition that increases the risk of developing a tumor in the pituitary gland, parathyroid gland, and pancreas. [Multiple endocrine neoplasia type 2 \(MEN2\)](#) [4] is a hereditary condition associated with medullary thyroid cancer and other types of cancer, including pheochromocytoma.

Immune system suppression. People with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), and people whose immune systems are suppressed because of an organ transplant have a higher risk of developing a neuroendocrine tumor.

Arsenic exposure. Exposure to the poison arsenic may increase the risk of Merkel cell cancer.

Sun exposure. Because Merkel cell cancer often occurs on the sun-exposed areas of the head and neck, many doctors think that sun exposure may be a risk factor for this type of cancer. Learn more about [protecting your skin from the sun](#) [5].

To continue reading this guide, use the menu on the side of your screen to select another section.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/neuroendocrine-tumor/risk-factors>

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19366>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19365>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24659>