

Oral & Oropharyngeal Cancer



Incidence and Mortality in Ohio (2018)¹:

- 1,857 cases diagnosed
- 407 deaths occurred

 In Ohio, 65% of the oral and pharynx cancer tumors seen are late-stage tumors, which are much harder to treat and lead to a poorer prognosis.

Oral Cavity Cancer

Occurs in the oral cavity which includes the front tongue, floor of the mouth, inside the cheeks and ridge area around the mouth.

Risk Factors

-  **Tobacco use:** smoking cigarettes, pipes, cigars, snuff, chew, smokeless tobacco.
-  **Alcohol use:** especially when tobacco is used at the same time.
-  **Exposure to HPV:** the sexually transmitted, Human Papillomavirus.
-  **Gender:** The American Cancer Society attributes the higher incidence of oral cavity cancers to higher rates of alcohol and tobacco use by males.
-  **Age:** Most people who are diagnosed with oral cancer are 55 or older.

 Regular dental check-ups that include an exam of the entire mouth are important in finding oral cancers early.

 Disparities in screenings include low income, uninsured/underinsured populations, low education, and communities of color.

Oropharyngeal Cancer

Occurs in the back regions of the mouth—around the base of the tongue, back of the throat, and tonsils.

Risk Factors

-  **Human Papillomavirus (HPV):**
 - Is the second most common sexually transmitted infection in the US.
 - Is the primary cause of oropharyngeal cancers.
 - Causes the most common HPV-associated cancer, surpassing cervical cancer.
-  **Gender:** More men of younger age are being diagnosed with HPV-related forms of oral cancer.
-  **Age:** HPV-related oral cancers are often diagnosed in people who are younger than age 55.

 Those with 1 to 5 oral sex partners are 2x more likely to develop oropharyngeal than those who have never had oral sex.²

 The fastest growing segment of the oropharyngeal cancer population is non-smokers younger than age 50.

CHALLENGE:

Only about 1/3 of U.S. adults aged 30 and over who visited a dental practice in the last two years reported receiving an oral cancer screening.³

OPPORTUNITY:

All dentists provide an oral cancer screening at each exam visit.

Policy Opportunities



> Integration of Care:

- Automating reminder/recall for oral cancer screenings across healthcare organizations. | [LEARN MORE >](#)
- Provide incentives for workplace tobacco cessation programs. | [LEARN MORE >](#)
- Include HPV education in health education standards/high risk behavior curriculum in schools.
- Healthcare providers promote cessation counseling and referral to the Ohio Tobacco Quit Line, with emphasis on Medicaid enrollees and state employees.

> Education & Workforce:

- Oral health professionals educate adolescent patients and their caregivers about HPV, tobacco and alcohol risk factors, and the benefits of HPV immunization in prevention of oropharyngeal cancer.
- Oral health professionals teach patients about symptoms of oral cancer and how to complete a self oral cancer screening.
- Oral health professionals administer vaccines. *(The American Dental Association has offered its support to dentists who are seeking to administer vaccines, and The American Dental Hygienists' Association supports dental hygienists providing vaccines.)*

> Data, Payment and Quality: | [LEARN MORE >](#)

- Maintain and enforce Ohio's smoke-free workplace law, including prompt collection of fines for violations.
- Increase investment in mass media campaigns where evidence suggests that adult-focused cessation campaigns have the greatest impact on smoking prevalence and medical costs.
- Require reporting on performance of cessation metrics in Medicaid Managed Care and provider contracts.
- Monitor compliance of private health insurance plans with cessation coverage requirements.

> Access & Advocacy:

- Maintain the adult dental benefit in the Medicaid program.
- Remove barriers such as co-pays, prior authorizations, and quit attempt limits in cessation programs. ⁴
- Offer quit incentives in cessation programs. ⁴
- Raise awareness of cessation coverage among providers and tobacco users. ⁴

Sources:

1. Ohio Annual Cancer Report, 2021, Ohio Department of Health • 2. Mount Sinai Head & Neck Institute
3. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2011-16 National Health & Nutrition Examination Survey • 4. Health Policy Institute of Ohio (HPIO)



> [OralHealthOhio.org](https://www.OralHealthOhio.org)

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