

## Incidence of HPV-positive head and neck cancer up in the U.S.

October 1 2019

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(HealthDay)—The rate of head and neck cancers has risen since the

1970s, and most are linked to human papillomavirus (HPV), according to a study recently published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*.

Brandon A. Mahal, M.D., from the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women's Cancer Center in Boston, and colleagues assessed data from 12,017 patients with squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck in the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) HPV Status Database. Specifically, the authors reviewed data on patients who were diagnosed between 2013 to 2014 with oropharyngeal cancers and cancers of the hypopharynx, nasopharynx, and 'other pharynx' subsites. Cancer of the oral cavity and larynx were not included in the database.

The researchers found that during the study period, the incidence of HPV-positive oropharyngeal cancers was 4.62 per 100,000 persons (95 percent confidence interval [CI], 4.51 to 4.73), compared with 1.82 for HPV-negative cancers (95 percent CI, 1.32 to 1.44). Having HPV-positive cancer was linked to lower cancer-specific mortality than HPV-negative cancer for oropharyngeal cancer (adjusted hazard ratio, 0.40; 95 percent CI, 0.30 to 0.53; P "Through our study, we now have a clearer picture of the extent to which oropharynx [cancer](#) affects Americans," a coauthor said in a statement. "This reinforces just how important it is to educate patients about the HPV vaccine, the importance of quitting smoking, as well as safe sex practices—particularly [oral sex](#), which is how we believe oral HPV is mostly contracted."

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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Citation: Incidence of HPV-positive head and neck cancer up in the U.S. (2019, October 1) retrieved 5 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-10-incidence-hpv-positive-neck-cancer.html>

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