

British boozing blamed for rise in oral cancer rates

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Britain has seen an "alarming" growth in oral cancer rates for people in their 40s, largely due to rising alcohol consumption, a leading British charity warned Tuesday.

New figures from Cancer Research UK reveal that the number of 40-somethings developing cancer of the mouth, tongue, lip and throat in Britain has gone up by 28 percent for men since the mid-1990s, and 24 percent for women.

While tobacco is the main risk factor for oral cancer, cancers caused by smoking often take up to 30 years to develop, so experts believe that the second biggest risk factor -- [alcohol](#) -- is the main culprit.

"[Alcohol consumption](#) has doubled since the 1950s and the trend we are now seeing is likely to be linked to Britain's continually rising drinking levels," said Hazel Nunn, health information manager at the charity.

Nunn described the latest figures, showing rates of oral cancers have increased by more than 45 percent since records began in 1975, as "really alarming".

"Around three quarters of oral cancers are thought to be caused by smoking and [drinking alcohol](#)," she said.

"Tobacco is, by far, the main risk factor for oral cancer... But for people in their 40s, it seems that other factors are also contributing to this jump

in [oral cancer](#) rates."

As well as alcohol, other factors include a diet low in [fruit](#) and [vegetables](#), and the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus (HPV), which also causes cervical cancer.

About 5,000 people are diagnosed with oral cancers in Britain each year, and about 1,800 people die of the disease.

Don Shenker, chief executive of the charity Alcohol Concern, said many people were not aware of the connection between alcohol and cancer.

"While alcoholic liver disease remains the number one killer linked to alcohol, more and more people are suffering from oral cancers -- and record drinking levels have undeniably played a part," he said.

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