

# Study finds public awareness of head and neck cancers low

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Public awareness of head and neck cancer (HNC) is low, with few Americans knowing much about risk factors such as tobacco use and human papillomavirus (HPV).

HNC is the 10 th most common cancer in the United States. It is a potentially preventable disease with about 75 percent of cases caused by tobacco use. In recent years, HPV has been established as a risk factor for HNC. Increased [public awareness](#) of HNC and its risk factors could help improve outcomes.

An online study of 2,126 adults was conducted in 2013.

About 66 percent of the participants were "not very" or "not at all" knowledgeable about HNC. Smoking and chewing or spitting tobacco were identified by 54.5 percent and 32.7 percent of respondents as [risk factors](#) for mouth and throat cancer, respectively. Only 0.8 percent of respondents identified HPV as a risk factor.

"Awareness of HNC is low compared with other cancers, which is concerning given the importance of risk factor avoidance and modification, as well as early patient detection, as drivers of prevention and improved outcomes." Alexander L. Luryi, B.S., of the Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, Conn. wrote in the paper.

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