

Men are 50 per cent more likely to get oesophageal cancer than 30 years ago

June 8 2015



Oesophageal cancer rates in men have increased by 50 per cent since the early 1980s, with new cases reaching almost 6,000, according to new statistics from Cancer Research UK.

The latest figures show the number of men diagnosed with [oesophageal cancer](#) has rapidly risen from around 2,700 cases three decades ago to

5,740 cases in 2012.

Given the changes in population size this equates to a 50 per cent increase from 15 to 23 cases per 100,000 people.

In women, the increase is much smaller with around 10 per cent more now developing the disease compared to the 80s. Now 2,802 women are diagnosed with oesophageal [cancer](#).

Professor Rebecca Fitzgerald, Cancer Research UK oesophageal cancer expert at the University of Cambridge, said: "These new statistics show a continuing rise in oesophageal cancer rates – especially in men. This is especially concerning as oesophageal cancer can be notoriously hard to treat.

"The good news is we're making great strides in the early detection of the disease. We're developing a simple way to diagnose a group of people at high risk – those with Barrett's oesophagus – by asking them to swallow a sponge to test for the disease. If we can pick up Barrett's oesophagus in more people, it could mean we can stop the disease becoming cancer. Catching it early is absolutely critical to survival."

To address the rising numbers of cases and boost research, Cancer Research UK is holding an International Symposium on Oesophageal Cancer at the University of Oxford this weekend (June 6-7).

Tony Richards, 67, a retired chartered accountant from Cambridgeshire, was initially diagnosed with Barrett's oesophagus in 2009. Later, in July 2011, he was diagnosed with [early stage](#) oesophageal cancer. Tony took part in the cytosponge BEST-2 trial run by Professor Rebecca Fitzgerald at Addenbrooke's Hospital.

Tony said: "Because the doctor found the cancer at an early stage, I was

able to have an operation to cut out the cancer from my oesophagus, rather than undergo more invasive surgery. I was delighted to take part in the cytosponge trial as I feel it's my way of giving something back. I hope it's going to be a great way of helping reduce the toll from this disease in future - as I'm very fortunate that my cancer was caught so early and removed."

The latest figures also show that oesophageal cancer is the sixth most common cause of cancer death in the UK – around 5,200 men died from the disease in 2012. Symptoms of oesophageal cancer include persistent indigestion or heartburn, difficulty swallowing, food coming back up, and unexplained weight loss. It's most likely not cancer, but it's best to get these symptoms checked by a GP.

Dr Claire Knight, health information manager at Cancer Research UK, said: "It's worrying to see how rapidly the number of men getting oesophageal cancer is rising. But there are many things people can do to help cut their chances of getting the disease. We know that almost 90 per cent of cases are preventable – stopping smoking, cutting down on alcohol, eating a balanced diet and maintaining a healthy weight will all help reduce your risk."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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