



EDITORIAL

Throat Cancer – Risk Factors

Throat Cancer refers to cancer involving structures of the throat. These include the *larynx* and the *pharynx*. Risk factors for cancer of the throat are varied and many but some are listed below.

1. **Tobacco use** which includes tobacco smoking or chewing is the most significant risk factor for throat cancer. The more you smoke the higher the risk of developing cancer. Smoke from cigarettes, pipes and cigars are equally dangerous. Passive smoking also increases the risk above baseline.
2. **Poor Nutrition** may increase the risk of getting throat cancer. Heavy alcohol use

tends to go with micronutrient deficiencies. Eating processed foods most of the time also increases the risk of throat cancer.

3. **The Human Papillomavirus (HPV)** is associated with several cancers including cancer of the throat Head and Neck *Squamous Cell Carcinoma* (HNSCC) in particular *Oropharyngeal Carcinoma*. Epstein Barr Virus also does cause cancer of the throat.
4. **Familial clustering of cancer** of the throat also does occur. This is due to inherited gene defects as found in patients with Fanconi anaemia and *Dyskeratosa Congenita*.
5. **Exposure to asbestos** increases the risk of lung cancer and cancer of the throat eventually. Cancer of the throat is not common in young people below the age of 50 years. It is found to occur more in blacks than other races in the world. *Gastroesophageal Reflux* disease also does predispose to cancer of the throat.



*African Journal Of Health
Sciences*

Dr. Hudson A. Lodenyo,
Consultant Physician & Gastroenterologist
Centre For Clinical Research
KENYA MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (KEMRI)