

Ready to start planning your care? Call us at [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225) to make an appointment.

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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

[Make an Appointment](#)

[Back](#)

[Head & Neck Cancers](#)

[About Head & Neck Cancer Treatment](#)

[Refer a Patient](#)

ABOUT US

[Our mission, vision & core values](#)

[Leadership](#)

[History](#)

[Equality, diversity & inclusion](#)

[Annual report](#)

[Give to MSK](#)

These are NCCN's latest guidelines for head and neck cancer. They may be different from those of other groups of experts.

If you're at average risk for head and neck cancer:

MSK recommends you get a yearly examination of your head, neck, and oropharynx from your primary care provider. We also recommend a yearly inspection of your oropharynx, mouth, and neck by your dentist.

If you're at higher risk for head and neck cancer:

Talk with your healthcare provider about getting screened.

What is My Risk for Head and Neck Cancer?

A risk factor is anything that increases your chance of getting a disease, such as cancer. The main risk factors for head and neck cancer are exposure to tobacco (such as smoking) and heavy use of alcohol. Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that may play a role in developing the disease.

You're at average risk if you do not have any of these higher risk factors for head and neck cancer. You may be at higher risk if you:

Had head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC).

Had dysplastic oral leukoplakia (a precancer lesion in the mouth).

Have [fanconi anemia](#).

Have [Li-Fraumeni syndrome](#).

Have Plummer-Vinson syndrome.

Are or have been a heavy smoker. Talk with your healthcare provider if you are a current or former smoker.

Drink a lot of alcohol now or used to be a heavy drinker. Talk with your healthcare provider about your current or former drinking habits.

Have papillomas (small growths or tumors) in your mouth or throat caused by HPV.

Are There Screening Tests for Head and Neck Cancer?

Currently, there are no screening tests that work well to find head and neck cancer.

A screening physical exam is part of a regular dental exam. It checks your neck, mouth, and oropharynx. The oropharynx is the middle section of your throat, including your soft palate, base of your tongue, and tonsils.

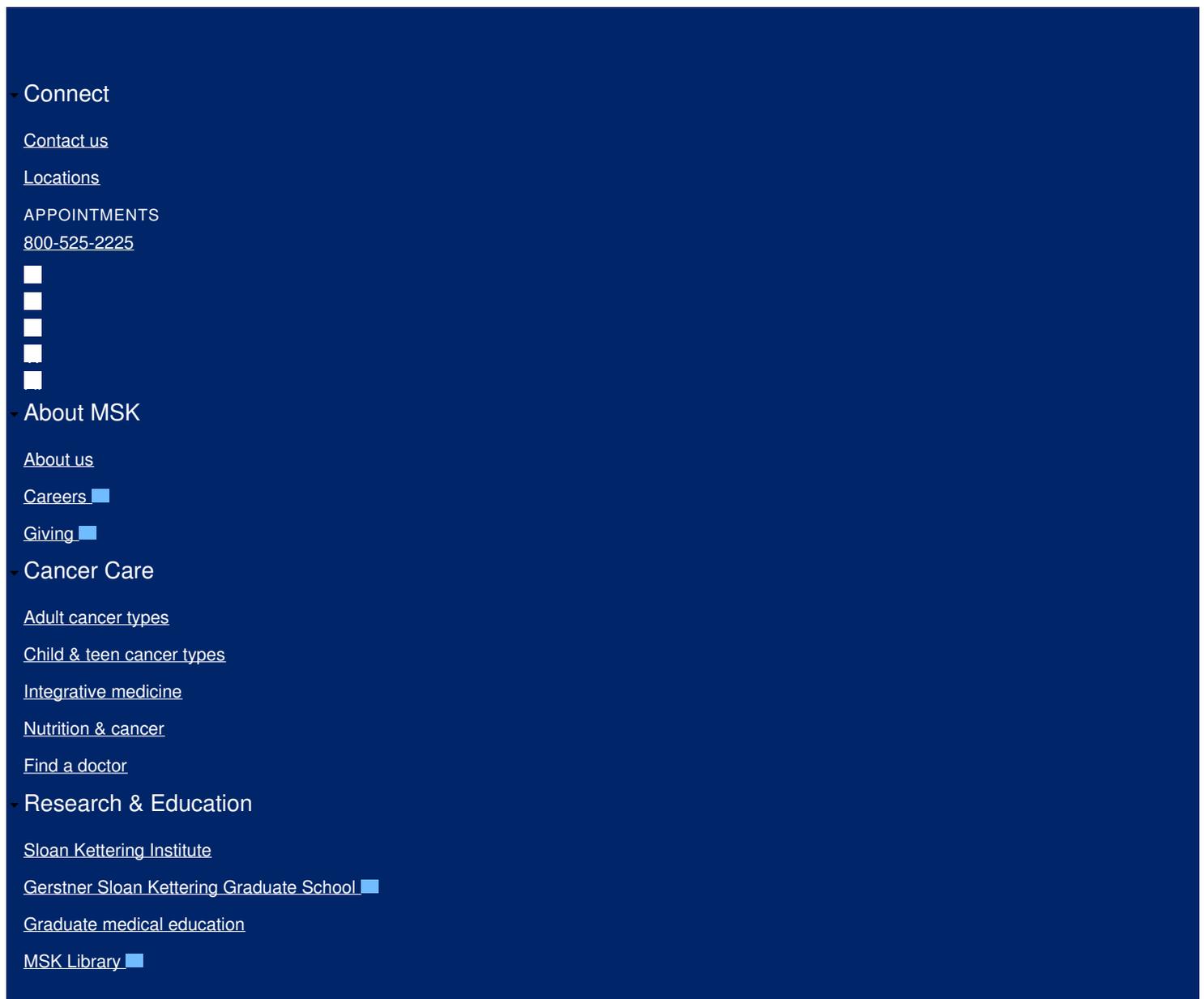
However, right now there is no evidence this type of regular screening reduces deaths from oral cancer. More research is needed to learn if it helps find head and neck cancer earlier, when it's easier to treat.

Request an Appointment

Call [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225)

Available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Eastern time)

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