

# **Southcoast Health to hold free head and neck cancer screenings on April 17**

Southcoast Health will offer free head and neck cancer screenings on the Southcoast Wellness Van on Tuesday, April 17, from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 114 McArthur Drive in New Bedford.

Doctors will inspect the lips, gums, cheeks and mouth using a light. They will also feel for lumps in the neck. Some of the symptoms that are common in head and neck cancer include a lump or sore that does not heal, a sore throat that does not go away, difficulty swallowing and a change or hoarseness in the voice. Head and neck cancers are more common in men and in people over the age of 40, and risk factors include smoking, chewing tobacco and consuming alcohol.

“Sex and cancer! We don’t often think of cancer of the mouth as a sexually transmitted disease. We have known for a long time that combining alcohol with tobacco increases the risk of an oral cavity cancer a hundred times compared to those who don’t do either. Now we have a new risk factor to worry about, human papilloma virus (HPV), a sexually-transmitted disease that increases the risk for oral cavity cancer. In fact, two out of three newly diagnosed oral cavity cancers are associated with this virus. Unfortunately, because of this new risk factor, we are diagnosing oral cavity cancer in younger patients who may never have smoked. If you have a non-healing or painful sore in your mouth for more than two to three weeks, it is very important to be evaluated,” said Dr. Wendy Stern, Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeon for Southcoast Health.

It is estimated that about 40,000 men and women in the United States are diagnosed with head and neck cancers annually.

Caucasians currently have the highest incidence rates of head and neck cancer, although death is still highest among African Americans.

The screening is in recognition of Oral, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Week, April 8 to 15, which is led by the Head and Neck Cancer Alliance and supported by the American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery.

Reservations are required for the screening, and can be made by calling 877-822-2732. For more information, visit [www.southcoast.org](http://www.southcoast.org).