

After A Head or Neck Cancer Diagnosis: Questions To Ask Your Doctor

A diagnosis of head or neck cancer can be overwhelming. This fact sheet will tell you:

- How to prepare for your appointments
- What the impact of your hormone receptor status might be
- What questions will help you learn more about your diagnosis



The Importance of Communicating With Your Health Care Team

Your team of doctors, nurses and social workers are there to help. Here are some tips for your appointments.

- **Bring a list of questions.** This will help you remember important things to ask. Write down or record the responses so that you do not forget them.
- **Consider bringing a loved one with you.** A friend or a family member can help ask questions and provide emotional support.
- **Ask questions about costs.** Knowing how much your treatment and medications might cost can help you plan ahead and focus more attention on getting better.

If your doctors and nurses do not know every answer, they may be able to guide you to those who do.



What About My Diet and Dental Health?

A healthy diet is important during cancer treatment. Your doctor can refer you to a registered dietitian (RD) to help manage treatment side effects.

You should also talk with your doctor about your dental health. A dentist can make sure that your mouth is as healthy as possible before you begin treatment and can provide important information to the rest of your health care team.



Questions That You May Want to Ask Your Health Care Team

The following questions should help you learn key information about your diagnosis and situation.

“What type of head and neck cancer do I have?”

Most head and neck cancers develop in squamous cells. These thin, flat cells form the lining of many parts of the head and neck, but there are other kinds.

“What stage is my head and neck cancer?”

A cancer’s stage means its size and how much it has spread in the body. The higher the number (I, II, III or IV), the more it has spread.

“What are my treatment options?”

There are many kinds of treatments for head and neck cancer. These can include surgery, radiation, targeted treatment and chemotherapy.

“Is there a clinical trial available to me?”

Clinical trials test new approaches based on known and effective treatments for cancer. Doctors often urge people to take part in clinical trials if they are available.

“Is surgery an option for me?”

If surgery is an option, your health care team can help you get ready. They should be able to explain what the surgery does, what recovery is like and what the effects may be.

“How can I cope with my emotions?”

In addition to loved ones, you can find help in places of worship, support groups and counseling. Activities such as meditation and relaxation exercises can also help.

CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include resource navigation, counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by master’s-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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