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PDF generated on July 30, 2016 from
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[Laryngeal and Hypopharyngeal Cancer - Latest Research](#)

[1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 10/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will read about the scientific research being done now to learn more about these types of cancer and how to treat them. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

Doctors are working to learn more about laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer, ways to prevent them, how to best treat them, and how to provide the best care to people diagnosed with either of these diseases. The following areas of research may include new options for patients through [clinical trials](#) [3]. Always talk with your doctor about the diagnostic and treatment options best for you.

- **Radiation therapy approaches.** Researchers are evaluating more effective ways of using radiation therapy. One promising approach, radiosensitization, involves giving drugs that make the cancer cells more sensitive to radiation therapy so they can be destroyed more easily. Another approach is called hyperfractionated radiation therapy. It gives radiation therapy in several small doses per day.
- **Targeted and tumor-specific therapy.** Increasing knowledge of the biology of cancer is leading to the development of [targeted therapies](#) [4], in addition to immunotherapy and biologic therapies (see below). Multiple new drugs are currently in various stages of development. They offer real hope for targeted, tumor-specific approaches with equal or greater effectiveness and fewer side effects for these types of cancer and for head and

neck cancer overall.

As discussed in the [Treatment Options](#) [5] targeted therapy section, cetuximab has already been approved for use with current radiation therapy approaches. Cetuximab is a monoclonal antibody directed at the epidermal growth factor receptor, or EGFR. A monoclonal antibody is a type of targeted therapy. It is directed against a specific protein in the cancer cells, in this case EGFR, and it does not affect cells that don't have that protein. Other EGFR inhibitors being studied are erlotinib (Tarceva), gefitinib (Iressa), lapatinib (Tykerb), and panitumumab (Vectibix), often in combination with other treatments.

In addition, another avenue researchers are studying includes [anti-angiogenesis therapy](#) [6]. Anti-angiogenesis therapy is a type of targeted therapy that focuses on stopping angiogenesis, which is the process of making new blood vessels. Because a tumor needs the nutrients delivered by blood vessels to grow and spread, the goal of anti-angiogenesis therapies is to "starve" the tumor. Drugs under investigation in this area include bevacizumab (Avastin) and sunitinib (Sutent).

- **Immunotherapy.** [Immunotherapy](#) [7], also called biologic therapy, is designed to boost the body's natural defenses to fight the cancer. It uses materials made either by the body or in a laboratory to improve, target, or restore immune system function. A drug called pembrolizumab (Keytruda) is being studied in clinical trials, along with other types of immunotherapy drugs.
- **Chemoprevention.** Researchers are evaluating the benefits of using [chemoprevention](#) [8] as a way to prevent the development of a second cancer after treatment for laryngeal or hypopharyngeal cancer has finished. Chemoprevention is the use of drugs or supplements to lower the risk of cancer.
- **Photodynamic therapy.** During photodynamic therapy, a substance that is sensitive to light (photosensitive) is injected into the blood. Cancer cells hold onto the substance longer than healthy cells. Then, laser lights are directed at the area of the tumor, and the substance in the cells is activated to destroy the cancer cells.
- **Palliative care.** Clinical trials are underway to find better ways of reducing symptoms and side effects of current laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer treatments in order to improve patients' comfort and quality of life.

Looking for More About the Latest Research?

If you would like additional information about the latest areas of research regarding laryngeal and hypopharyngeal cancer, explore these related items that take you outside of this guide:

- To find clinical trials specific to your diagnosis, talk with your doctor or [search online clinical trial databases now](#) [9]. Please note this link will take you outside of this guide.
- Visit ASCO's [CancerProgress.Net](#) [10] website to learn more about the historical pace of research for [head and neck cancer](#) [11]. Please note this link takes you to a separate ASCO website.
- Visit the website of the [Conquer Cancer Foundation](#) [12] to find out how to help support research for every cancer type. Please note this link takes you to a separate ASCO website.

The [next section in this guide is Coping with Side Effects](#) [13], and it offers some guidance in how to cope with the physical, emotional, and social changes that cancer and its treatment can bring. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/laryngeal-and-hypopharyngeal-cancer/latest-research>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19004>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24729>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19003>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24376>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24726>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24973>

[9] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24878>

[10] <http://www.cancerprogress.net/>

[11] http://www.cancerprogress.net/timeline/head_and_neck

[12] <http://www.conquercancerfoundation.org/research-results>

[13] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19005>