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[Laryngeal and Hypopharyngeal Cancer - Questions to Ask the Doctor](#) [1]

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

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some questions to ask your doctor or other members of your health care team to help you better understand your diagnosis, treatment plan, and overall care. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

[Talking often with the doctor is important](#) [3] to make informed decisions about your health care. These suggested questions are a starting point to help you learn more about your cancer care and treatment. You are also encouraged to ask additional questions that are important to you. You may want to print this list and bring it to your next appointment, or [download Cancer.Net's free mobile app](#) [4] for an e-list and other interactive tools to manage your care.

Questions to ask after getting a diagnosis

- What type of head and neck cancer do I have? Where exactly is it located?
- What is the stage and grade of the cancer? What does this mean?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?

Questions to ask about choosing a treatment and managing side effects

- What are my treatment options?
- What clinical trials are open to me? Where are they located, and how do I find out more about them?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the cancer, help me feel better, or both?
- Should I talk with another doctor to get a second opinion?
- Who will be part of my health care team, and what does each member do?
- Who will be coordinating my overall treatment?
- Should I see any other specialists before starting treatment? Specifically, should I talk with a radiation oncologist, medical oncologist, or plastic surgeon?
- Can you recommend an oncologic dentist?
- What kind of mouth rinses or toothpaste can I use?
- How should I treat symptoms related to dry mouth?
- Can you recommend a speech pathologist?
- What are the possible side effects of each treatment option, both in the short term and the long term?
- What can be done to prevent or manage these side effects?

- If I am a smoker, will quitting help this treatment have a better outcome?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
- Could this treatment affect my sex life? If so, how and for how long?
- Could this treatment affect my ability to become pregnant or have children? If so, should I talk with a fertility specialist before cancer treatment begins?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?
- What support services are available for me? To my family?
- Whom should I call for questions or problems?
- Are there any other questions I should be asking?

Questions to ask about having surgery

- What type of surgery will I have?
- Will lymph nodes need to be removed? If so, what type of neck dissection will be done? What does this mean?
- How likely is it that I will lose my voice box (larynx)? If this is necessary, what are the options available for voice/speech rehabilitation?
- Will there be need for major reconstruction? How will this affect my ability to speak and eat?
- How long will the operation take?

- How long will I be in the hospital?
- Can you describe what my recovery from surgery will be like?
- What are the possible long-term effects of having this surgery?
- What functional deficits in speech, swallowing, or shoulder motion will likely occur?

Questions to ask about having radiation therapy

- What type of treatment is recommended?
- What is the goal of this treatment?
- How long will it take to give this treatment?
- What side effects can I expect during treatment?
- What are the possible long-term effects of having this treatment?
- Will there be any lasting side effects, such as loss of saliva, loss of taste, or permanent difficulty in swallowing?
- How will I be able to eat a balanced diet if treatment affects my ability to eat the foods I am used to eating?
- What can be done to relieve the side effects?

Questions to ask about having chemotherapy or targeted therapy

- What type of treatment is recommended?
- What is the goal of this treatment?

- How long will it take to give this treatment?
- What side effects can I expect during treatment?
- What are the possible long-term effects of having this treatment?
- What can be done to relieve the side effects?

Questions to ask about planning follow-up care

- What is the risk of the cancer returning? Are there signs and symptoms I should watch for?
- What long-term side effects or late effects are possible based on the cancer treatment I received?
- Will I need cancer rehabilitation services after treatment? What can I expect?
- If I am a smoker, how can you help me quit?
- What follow-up tests will be needed, and how often will I need them?
- How do I get a treatment summary and survivorship care plan to keep in my personal records?
- Who will be coordinating my follow-up care?
- What survivorship support services are available to me? To my family?

The [next section in this guide is Additional Resources](#) [5], and it offers some more resources on this website beyond this guide that may be helpful to you. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

- [1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/laryngeal-and-hypopharyngeal-cancer/questions-ask-doctor>
- [2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>
- [3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24958>
- [4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/29951>
- [5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19009>