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[Oral and Oropharyngeal Cancer - Questions to Ask the Doctor \[1\]](#)

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board \[2\]](#), 01/2015

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.

- What type of oral or oropharyngeal 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?
- What are the 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 get an additional consultation or second opinion?
- Who will be part of my health care team, and what does each member do?
- Who will be coordinating my overall treatment and follow-up care?

- 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 relieve these side effects?
- What functional deficits in speech, swallowing, or shoulder motion will likely occur, and what rehabilitation services are available?
- If I have surgery, will there be need for major reconstruction? If so, how will this affect my ability to speak and eat?
- If surgery is done, will there be a need for a neck dissection (removal of lymph nodes)? If so, what type of dissection will be done? What does this mean?
- Will this surgery affect my appearance in any way?
- 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?
- If I receive radiation therapy, what are the lasting side effects of such treatment, including loss of saliva, loss of taste, and permanent difficulty in swallowing?
- If my treatment plan will affect my ability to eat the foods I am used to, how will my nutrition be maintained?
- Can you recommend an oncologic dentist before treatment begins?
- Can you recommend an oncologic speech pathologist before treatment begins?
- Should I see other specialists prior to treatment? Should I specifically talk with a radiation oncologist, medical oncologist, or a plastic surgeon?
- What will rehabilitation after treatment consist of?
- If I am a smoker, will quitting help this treatment have a better outcome? Can you help me quit?
- 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?
- After treatment, what follow-up tests will be needed, and how often will I need them?
- What are the chances this tumor will recur?
- What are the chances of developing a secondary cancer?
- 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 to me? To my family?
- Whom should I call for questions or problems?

The next section offers some more resources that may be helpful to you. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select Additional Resources, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/oral-and-oropharyngeal-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>

