Patient Information about Head and Neck Cancer
http://www.oncologychannel.com/patient-information-head-and-neck-cancer/index.shtml

Head and neck cancer usually originates in the lining of the mouth, nose, throat, or sinuses, or in glands in the neck area (e.g., salivary glands, cervical lymph nodes). There are several types of head and neck cancer, including oral cancer (e.g., tongue cancer, lip cancer, mouth cancer) and throat cancer (e.g., laryngeal cancer).

Tobacco use, including cigarette smoking and chewing tobacco, especially when combined with alcohol use, is the primary head and neck cancer risk factor. Certain viruses (e.g., human papillomavirus [HPV], Epstein-Barr virus), radiation therapy to the head and neck area, and inhaled substances (e.g., asbestos, chemicals) also may increase the risk. Head and neck cancer symptoms include an unexplained lump or sore that does not heal, difficulty swallowing, chronic sore throat, and changes in the voice (e.g., raspiness, hoarseness).

Here are some questions to ask your oncology team (e.g., oral surgeon, oncologist, otolaryngologist) about head and neck cancer. **Print this page**, check the questions you would like answered, and take it with you to your next medical appointment. Learning as much as possible about head and neck cancer treatment and prevention can make it easier to make important medical decisions.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Head and Neck Cancer

- ☐ What makes you suspect that I have head and neck cancer?
- ☐ What are the common risk factors for head and neck cancer?
- ☐ What type of head and neck cancer do you think I have?
- ☐ What kinds of tests, including biopsy, will be performed to diagnose head and neck cancer?
- ☐ What do these diagnostic tests involve?
- ☐ How should I prepare for these tests?
- ☐ What are the benefits, risks, and possible complications associated with these diagnostic tests?
- ☐ When will the test results be available? **Date**:
- ☐ Should I call for the results or will someone contact me? **Telephone number to call**:
- ☐ Who will discuss the results of these diagnostic tests with me? **Physician/Specialist**:

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- ☐ How will the extent of my head and neck cancer be determined?
- ☐ Has my cancer spread (metastasized)?
- ☐ Is there a staging system available for this type of head and neck cancer? If so, what is the stage of my disease?
- ☐ What is the usual prognosis for people with this type and stage of head and neck cancer?
- ☐ Should I get a second medical opinion before beginning head and neck cancer treatment? Why or why not?
- ☐ Who will be the members of my oncology team?
- ☐ How do I contact these physicians?
  Physician(s)/Specialist(s): **Telephone number(s) to call**:
- ☐ What types of head and neck cancer treatments are available?
- ☐ Can you explain surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy for this type and stage of head and neck cancer to me?
- ☐ What are the benefits, disadvantages, and possible side effects associated with each of these treatments?
- ☐ What type(s) of treatment do you recommend?
- ☐ Why do you recommend this head and neck cancer treatment?
- ☐ How can I better prepare myself for treatment?
- ☐ How will my treatments be administered?
- ☐ How can I help myself to feel better during my cancer treatment?
- ☐ How long will my treatments last?
- ☐ How will my condition be monitored during treatment?
- ☐ What should I do if my symptoms worsen or I experience severe side effects?
  Telephone number to call:
- ☐ If these treatments are unsuccessful, what other types of treatment are available?

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- ☐ How likely is my cancer to spread (metastasize)?
- ☐ How likely is my cancer to recur after treatment?
- ☐ Do you recommend that I participate in a clinical trial for head and neck cancer patients? Why or why not?
- ☐ Might complementary treatments be helpful? If so, what types of therapy do you recommend?
- ☐ Can this type of cancer be prevented? If so, what does head and neck cancer prevention involve?
- ☐ Can you recommend an online or local support group for patients who have cancer of the head and neck?
- ☐ Can you recommend resources for additional information about head and neck cancer?

Notes/Additional Information

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