

Head and Neck Cancer: Symptoms



What are the symptoms of head and neck cancer?

Head and neck cancer is a group of cancers that can start in the mouth, lips, nose, larynx, throat, salivary glands, or sinuses. Some common symptoms of cancer in the head and neck include:

- Growth or sore in the mouth that doesn't heal
- Sore throat that doesn't go away
- Hoarse voice or other voice changes that don't go away
- Trouble swallowing

Many symptoms depend on the type of head and neck cancer, where it starts, and if the cancer has spread. Other symptoms of these cancers are:

- Lump in the neck that doesn't hurt
- Lump or sore inside the nose or on the lip that doesn't heal
- Feeling like something is stuck in the throat
- Blocked sinuses or nasal congestion that won't clear
- Chronic sinus infections
- Coughing up blood or bleeding in the mouth
- Trouble opening your mouth, speaking, or breathing
- Pain when swallowing
- Pain in the ear, face, chin, neck, upper back, jaw, or upper teeth
- Frequent headaches or pain around the nose, cheeks, or forehead
- Frequent nosebleeds or ones that don't stop
- Weakness in the muscles of the face, jaw, and tongue
- Double vision or vision loss
- Numbness in the face
- Ringing in the ears or hearing problems
- Swelling of the eyes, under the chin, or around the jaw
- Bad breath even with good oral hygiene
- Red or white patches in the mouth
- Tooth pain or sore gums
- Loose teeth or dentures
- Jaw pain

- Unexplained weight loss

When to see your healthcare provider

Many of these symptoms may be caused by other health problems. But it is important to see your healthcare provider if you have any of these symptoms. Only a healthcare provider can tell if you have cancer or some other problem that may need to be treated. Your healthcare provider may send you to an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist (otolaryngologist) or to a head and neck surgeon.

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