

Head and neck cancer (HNC) can be a complex and challenging disease. It may seem confusing and feel overwhelming as you wait for a diagnosis, go through treatment, begin rehabilitation, and experience survivorship. While each person's experience will be somewhat different, many people living with HNC will interact with similar types of healthcare professionals who are all there to provide help and support along the way. If you're not sure where to find some of these specialists, be sure to talk with your doctor or nurse—or your insurance company—as they will likely be able to provide you with information and referrals if necessary.

This resource is designed to help you better understand different health care providers who you may encounter—called the multidisciplinary team. Getting to know your multidisciplinary team and learning more about what they do may help you feel more confident advocating for yourself and your specific needs during your cancer care, especially if your hospital or cancer center doesn't have these specialists on staff.



About Made of More

This resource was developed as part of Made of More, an initiative that aims to provide support and community for those affected by HNC. Scan the QR code to visit **MadeofMore.com** to find personal stories of people impacted by HNC, as well as helpful resources and information designed to help you as you navigate your own HNC story.

Multidisciplinary team roles

Everyone's head and neck cancer (HNC) experience will be unique to their diagnosis, personal situation, and treatment plan. Although you might not seek care from everyone listed here, these are some of the healthcare professionals you may seek and receive care from at various points in your cancer experience.



CASE MANAGER OR NAVIGATOR

This individual is trained to help guide you through the healthcare system. They help you understand the information you may need associated with your care. They may also assist with financial resources, insurance benefits, and coverage.



Actor portrayal



DENTIST

Some dentists routinely screen for cancers of the mouth, and if they notice something suspicious, may refer you to see a specialist and/or for a biopsy. Some treatments for head and neck cancer, like radiation therapy, may increase your risk of dental complications in the future, so you may need specialized dental care before, during, and after cancer treatment. You may want to seek out a dentist with expertise in oncology. It will be important to communicate your treatment details—like type of treatment or start and end dates—with your dental team.



EAR, NOSE, AND THROAT DOCTOR (ENT)

ENTs, also known as otolaryngologists, specialize in diagnosing and treating diseases of the ear, nose, and throat. These physicians take a closer look at the area of concern and may conduct or order imaging tests (like a nasal endoscopy, MRI or CT scan), take samples for a biopsy (a procedure where tissue is removed for examination to determine if cancer is present) to help detect cancer, and perform surgery.



MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

This could be a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or therapist that provides emotional and social support; some specialize in oncology. Mental and emotional wellbeing are important aspects of health, and a trained mental health professional can help you with many of the feelings that may arise when dealing with cancer.



MEDICAL ONCOLOGIST

A medical oncologist will work with you to determine the best treatment plan, which may include chemotherapy, targeted therapy, or immunotherapy. They may also collaborate with other specialists based on your treatment approach.



NURSES

Nurses, some of whom specialize in oncology, are trained to help provide education and support with day-to-day things like managing side effects and answering any questions from you or your caregiver.



CYTOPATHOLOGIST/ PATHOLOGIST

A specialist educated and trained in the area of diagnosis and management of mouth diseases.



PHYSICAL AND/OR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

A medical professional who is trained in physical treatments, such as exercise and massage. These individuals will work with you both during and after treatment to help rebuild and strengthen muscles in your head and neck, and regain function to help you adjust to your new normal during everyday activities.



PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER (PCP)

A PCP might be the first healthcare provider you visit, as they are typically involved in day-to-day health concerns for their patients. The PCP may refer you to see an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist (also known as an otolaryngologist) if there is a concern.



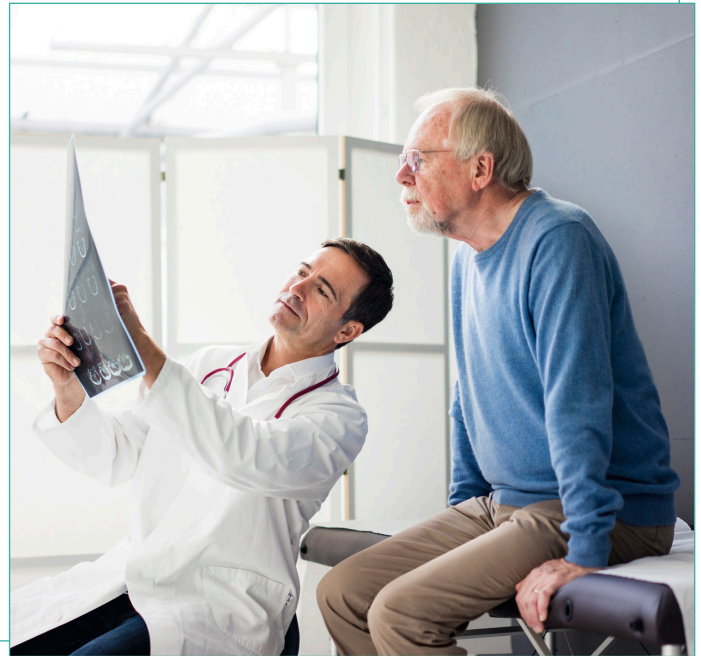
RADIATION ONCOLOGIST

This is an oncologist who specializes in treating cancer with radiation therapy. They will coordinate with you and your cancer care team if you require radiation, which may be used as a sole treatment, in combination with other treatments, or after surgery to help prevent cancer from coming back.



REGISTERED DIETICIAN (RD)

A registered dietitian is a licensed medical professional specializing in diet and nutrition. You may want to look for an RD who specializes in oncology. An RD can help you adjust the food you're eating to ensure proper nutrition while also helping with eating-related challenges that may be caused by certain treatments or surgeries.



Actor portrayal



SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST (SLP)

This is a specialist who provides educational and clinical services to help minimize challenges with speaking and swallowing, which may become impaired as a result of the cancer itself, treatment, or surgery.



SURGEON

If you are diagnosed with HNC that can be removed surgically, you will likely see a head and neck surgeon who is an ENT. Depending on your individual needs, you may also see a reconstructive, microvascular, or maxillofacial surgeon.

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