



## Your Pre-surgery Treatment

*For patients receiving treatment for head and neck cancer*

**Treatment of laryngeal cancer depends on several factors. Your doctor has reviewed your biopsy results and X-rays, and decided that treatment for your cancer diagnosis is surgery. This section of the Guide to Your Head and Neck Cancer Treatment explains the pre-surgery plan and the surgical procedure.**

At your pre-surgery visit, your doctor will ask about your health history and do a physical exam. Then you will have an exam with a *laryngoscope* (a tube with a light and a camera, used to view the larynx). You will have either an *indirect* or a *direct* exam.

### ***Indirect Exam***

This type of exam can occur in the doctor's office. It requires use of a local anesthetic. The laryngoscope is inserted via the nose and allows the doctor to see the tissue in your larynx. The doctor may do a *biopsy*, which is taking a small tissue sample for a closer look and further testing.

### ***Direct Exam***

This type of exam is done under light anesthesia. The doctor uses the laryngoscope to do a complete exam. During the direct exam, biopsies can be taken from areas of concern.

### ***Biopsy***

When a biopsy is done, the tissue sample is sent to a pathologist. Pathologists will examine the tissue under a microscope and do special testing to confirm a diagnosis. Typically, cancers of the larynx are *squamous* cell cancer. Additional testing will occur if there is a cancer diagnosis. CT (computed tomography) scans and X-rays may be done to give the doctor more information.

## Terms

**Laryngoscope:** a tube with a light and a camera, used to view the larynx

**Squamous cell cancer:** the typical form of cancer of the larynx

## Your Pre-surgery Plan of Care

After you decide to have surgery, you will return to the Otolaryngology clinic for your pre-surgery visits. **This is a good time to ask questions.** At your pre-surgery visits:

- You will be seen by either a **surgery resident** or a **nurse practitioner** to review the surgery and sign your surgical consent form. At that time we will also review the plan for your hospital stay.
- A **speech pathologist** will meet you and review important information about what to expect after surgery. If a total laryngectomy is planned, the speech pathologist will explain what to expect with loss of your normal voice and how you will speak with a new voice. The speech pathologist will see you after surgery in the hospital as well.
- A **social worker** will be in contact with you and your family either in our clinic on the day before surgery or after surgery while you are in the hospital. The social worker will talk with you about any concerns that will be important when you are discharged from the hospital.
- Your pre-surgery visits will also include a visit to the **pre-anesthesia clinic** to meet with the anesthesiology staff.
- You may also see one of our **internal medicine doctors** before surgery if there are any concerns with your medical history.
- You may meet with the **dietitian** before surgery if you are having a difficult time swallowing or if you are losing weight. Call 206-598-6004 to make an appointment to see a dietitian before surgery.

## Surgical Treatment of Laryngeal Cancer

Surgery for laryngeal cancer is either a *partial* or *total laryngectomy*.

### *Partial Laryngectomy*

A partial laryngectomy involves removal of part of the voice box, which is either part of or all of a vocal cord or the epiglottis. A partial laryngectomy will preserve the voice.

Patients will have a *tracheostomy tube* at the base of the throat while they are healing from surgery. After surgery, the voice may be hoarse or weak.

### Total Laryngectomy

A total laryngectomy involves removal of the voice box with creation of a *stoma* at the base of the throat. Total laryngectomy patients breathe through the stoma after surgery and not through the mouth or nose.

Total laryngectomy patients will not be able to speak using the vocal cords and will learn to speak in a new way after surgery. If there has been spread of cancer to the lymph nodes in the neck, surgery will include removal of the neck lymph nodes as well.

### Good Nutrition Helps Your Body Heal

It is important to maintain your weight before surgery so that your body has enough nutrition stores to heal after surgery. The goal is to prevent weight loss as much as possible.

If you are having trouble swallowing or have a poor appetite, you may need to eat more often and use supplements such as Ensure Plus or milkshakes. You may need to chop or make foods smooth in a blender and add moisture to foods. This makes it easier for you to eat enough to keep from losing weight.

#### Terms

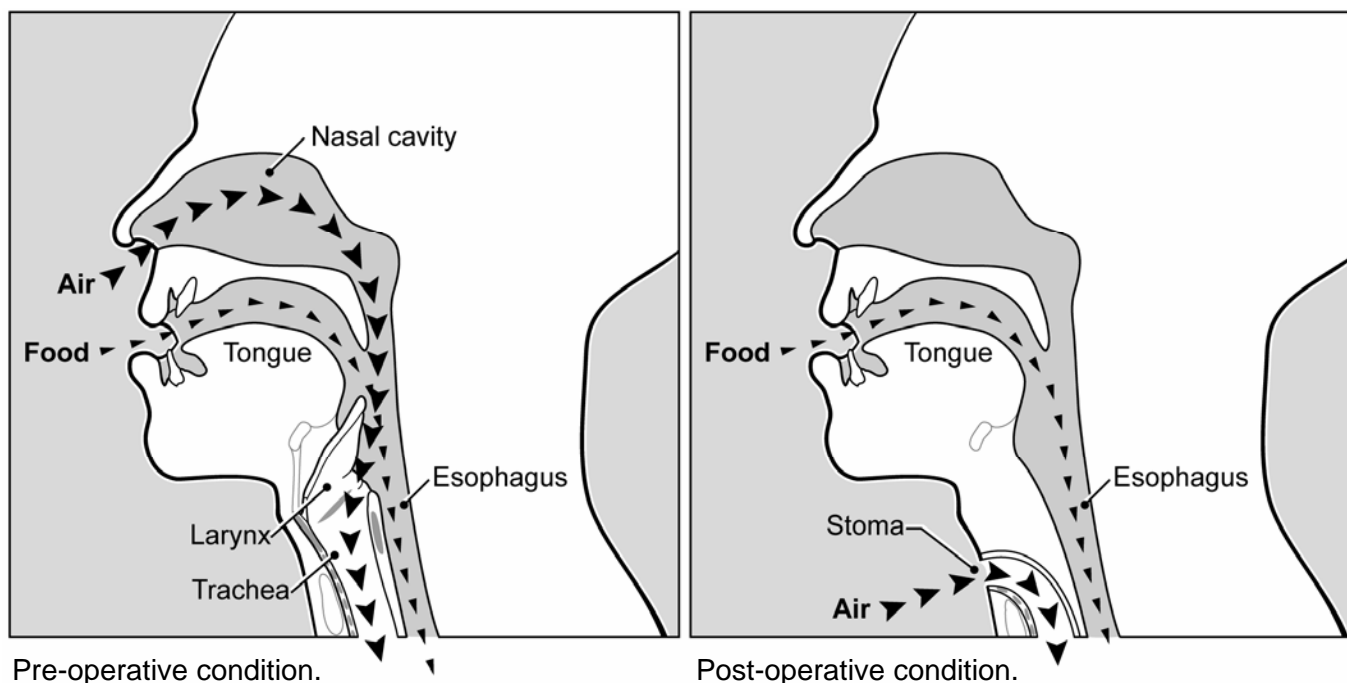
**Biopsy:** a tissue sample that is sent to a pathologist

**Partial laryngectomy:** involves removal of part of the voice box, which preserves the voice

**Stoma:** used for patients who have a total laryngectomy

**Total laryngectomy:** involves removal of the voice box

**Tracheostomy tube:** used for patients who have a partial laryngectomy while they are healing from surgery



**Potential Pre-Operative Visits**

**ARNP (Nurse Practitioner)**

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**Speech Pathology**

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**Social Work**

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**Anesthesia**

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## Questions?

Call 206-598-4022

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

Otolaryngology/Head and Neck Surgery Center: 206-598-4022

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## Internal Medicine

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## Dietitian

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## Respiratory Therapy

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## Physical Therapy

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