



**PATIENT EDUCATION**

## Head and neck cancer & radiation therapy

A plain-language guide for patients and families. Bring this to your visit. It does not replace advice from your clinician.

### What is this cancer?

Head-and-neck cancers include the mouth, throat (oropharynx, often HPV-related), larynx, and sinuses. Radiation with or without chemotherapy is a mainstay for many stages, sometimes after surgery. The course is demanding: mucositis, taste change, and thick saliva are expected. Finishing on time improves the chance the cancer stays controlled. We plan supports before day 1.

### What you may notice

- A sore throat, ear pain, a neck lump, hoarseness, or a mouth ulcer that does not heal
- Trouble swallowing or a muffled voice
- An HPV-related throat cancer in someone who feels otherwise well
- Dental problems that need attention before a long course

### Usual care — the big picture

ENT/head-and-neck surgery, medical oncology, dentistry, nutrition, and speech therapy share care. PEG feeding tubes are a planning tool for some people, not a failure.

**Where CureRays may fit.** CureRays delivers image-guided IMRT-style neck and primary-site radiation with a custom mask. We will introduce mouth care, pain, and nutrition on day one. Confirm dental extractions before we start when they are needed.

### What radiation treatment usually involves

- Dental clearance when there is time
- Mask making and a practice if you are anxious
- Daily treatments for several weeks; weekly weight and mouth exams
- Speech-swallow and dietitian visits baked into the calendar

### Immobilization — why it matters

The mask is the immobilization. We can add extra time, music before the beam, or medicine for claustrophobia. Signal if you need a pause.



### Side effects you should know about

Effects depend on the area treated, the dose, and other therapies. This list is typical, not a promise and not complete. Confirm your personal list with your clinician.

- **Mucositis, dry mouth, taste change** - see the mouth-care, dry-mouth, and nutrition sheets. Honey and glutamine teaching, if used, is on the mouth-care sheet.
- **Skin** on the neck.
- **Fatigue and weight loss.**
- **Rare / serious.** You cannot swallow saliva, fever, stridor, or a feeding-tube problem.

### What this means for you at CureRays

We will be honest that this course is one of the harder ones we give — and that people get through it with a team. Ask every week what to add, not only what to endure.

### Questions to ask

- What is the primary site and HPV status in plain words?
- Do I need a feeding tube now or only if weight drops?
- How do we keep me on calendar if I feel terrible in week 5?
- What dental and swallow follow-up continues after the last beam?

### How to schedule or learn more

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