

## Trials

- You may be offered the option to enter into a clinical trial
- These trials are to help us to find out improved ways to treat head and neck cancers
- We only enter in trials that we feel are safe for you to be in
- If you choose not to be in a trial no-one will mind

## Website address:

[www.southtees.nhs.uk/services/head-neck-cancer-north-east/](http://www.southtees.nhs.uk/services/head-neck-cancer-north-east/)

## Comments, compliments, concerns or complaints

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is concerned about the quality of care you receive and strives to maintain high standards of health care.

However we do appreciate that there may be an occasion where you, or your family, feel dissatisfied with the standard of service you receive. Please do not hesitate to tell us about your concerns as this helps us to learn from your experience and to improve services for future patients.

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

This service aims to advise and support patients, families and carers and help sort out problems quickly on your behalf. This service is available, and based, at The James Cook University Hospital but also covers the Friarage Hospital in Northallerton, our community hospitals and community health services. Please ask a member of staff for further information.

If you require this information in a different format please contact Freephone 0800 0282451

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# Tongue Base or Tonsil Cancer

## Diagnosis

Patient information

Macmillan  
Cancer Support

## What is it?

This leaflet is about 'squamous cell carcinoma' which is one type of cancer that affects the tongue base (back of tongue) and tonsil – sometime together called throat cancer.

This area is known as the oropharynx in medical terms.

## Where is this area?

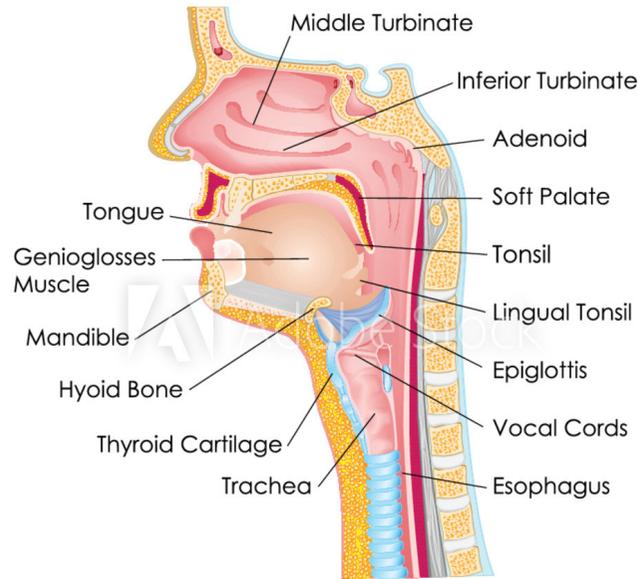


Diagram of Throat Anatomy

## Diagnosis

A biopsy is taken to confirm the cancer diagnosis, this may also include a 'needle test' sample taken from the glands in the neck if they are enlarged

**You will need some scans:**

- MRI scan of your head and neck
- CT scan of your chest
- PET CT scan – for extra information about the rest of your body

You can find more information about these investigations on our website or from your Cancer Nurse Specialist.

## Causes of tongue and tonsil cancer

### 1. Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

Some tongue and tonsil cancers are related to a virus called Human Papilloma Virus. 4 out of 5 adults have had this virus in their throat and in most people it doesn't cause any problems. In a small group of people it causes tongue base or tonsil cancer. If you have a HPV related cancer, you are not infective and do not need to avoid physical or sexual contact with your normal partner. If you would like more information about HPV, then please ask your GP or specialist nurse.

### 2. Smoking and drinking alcohol

Tobacco useage (smoking or chewing) and alcohol (more than 14 units a week) are also known to cause tonsil and tongue base cancer. If you have a cancer and you continue to smoke or drink spirits or too much alcohol, the chances of cure are much smaller. Please discuss with your specialist nurse or GP if you would like help to cut down or stop.

## Treatment options

When you have had all of your biopsies and scans your case will be discussed with a team of cancer experts in a Multi-Disciplinary Team meeting (MDT).

You will then come to a combined clinic appointment with a surgeon and an oncologist (radiotherapy and chemotherapy doctor) to discuss your treatment options.

**Treatment options can include:**

- Surgery
- Radiotherapy (with or without chemotherapy)
- Combination of surgery and radiotherapy (with or without chemotherapy)

If there is one treatment that has a better chance of cure than the other you will be told of this difference.