

Section Two: Diagnosing head and neck cancer

Tekiona Rua: Te whakataua
i te matepukupuku upoko
me te kaki



Key points:

- If your GP or whānau doctor is concerned that your symptoms may be signs of head and neck cancer, they will recommend further tests.
- The purpose of these tests is to find out whether you have head and neck cancer and, if you do, the type of head and neck cancer you have, and if the cancer has spread to other parts of your body.

Common tests include:

- blood tests
 - imaging tests (scans and X-rays)
 - scopes (endoscopy or nasendoscopy)
 - biopsy
 - HPV testing.
- The results of any tests you have will help your treatment team to decide on the best treatment for you.

Ngā Kōrero Matua:

- Mehemea kai te māharahara tō GP, tō tākuta whānau rānei, tērā pea he tohu ngā whakatau o te matepukupuku upoko me te kaki, ka taunakitia e rātou kia whāia anō he whakamātautau.
- Ko te pūtake o ēnei whakamātautau, ko te rapu mehemea kei te whai koe i te matepukupuku upoko me te kaki, te momo matepukupuku upoko me te kaki kai te whai koe, me te tiro mehemea kua roha ki wāhi kē o tō tinana.

Ko ngā whakamātautau ka whāia, ko ēnei:

- Whakamātautau toto
 - Whakamātautau ata (ngā titiro whakatau me ngā whakaata roto)
 - Ngā Scope (endoscopy, te nasendoscopy)
 - Unuhanga
 - Whakamātautau HPV
- Ka āwhina ngā hua o ngā whakamātautau ka whāia e koe, i tō kapa maimoatanga ki te whakatau i te maimoatanga pai rawa mōu.

Diagnosis

If you have noticed any of the symptoms of head and neck cancer, you will usually see your GP or whānau doctor first. They will talk to you about your symptoms, ask about any risk factors you may have, and give you a physical examination. Sometimes, it might be your dentist who notices a change in your mouth.

If your GP, whānau doctor or dentist is concerned that your symptoms may be signs of head and neck cancer, they will refer you to a specialist doctor for further tests.

The purpose of these tests is to find out if you have cancer and, if you do, the type of head and neck cancer you have, and if the cancer has spread to other parts of your body. The results of any tests you have will help your treatment team to decide on the best treatment options for you.

You may have one or more of the following tests:

Physical examination

The doctor will look carefully at your ears, eyes, mouth, gums, lips, cheeks, throat, tongue, nose, and neck for any changes or lumps. They may also gently feel both sides of your neck to check your lymph nodes.

Ultrasound scan

An ultrasound scan uses soundwaves to build a picture of your neck and lymph nodes.

X-rays

X-rays are used to create digital pictures of your jaw (including your teeth) and chest.

Scopes (endoscopy)

A scope is a thin, flexible tube with a light and camera on the end that is used to look for any changes in your nose, throat, voice box (larynx), and oesophagus (food pipe).

The most common scopes are nasoendoscopies and laryngoscopies.

If needed, a biopsy can be taken while you are having a scope.

Biopsy

A biopsy removes small samples of tissue from your nose, mouth, throat, or lymph nodes. Tissue samples are looked at under a microscope to see if there are any cancer cells present. If cancer cells are seen in your biopsy sample, the information will help your treatment team to learn more about the type of head and neck cancer you have.

There are different ways of getting biopsies from the head and neck area, and your doctor will talk to you about the best options for you.

HPV testing

If cancer cells are seen in your biopsy sample, your doctor may ask for further testing (using the same sample) to see if the cancer cells are positive for high-risk types of HPV.

CT, MRI, and PET-CT scans

CT, MRI, and PET-CT scans are different imaging tests that are used to build a detailed picture of the body.

If there is a concern that cancer has spread to other parts of your body, you may have a CT, MRI, or PET-CT scan to find out how much cancer there is in your body and where it is located (staging - see page 27). The results of your tests will help your treatment team to decide on the best treatment for you.

Further tests

Your treatment team may recommend other tests, including:

- general blood tests
- hearing tests
- scans of other body organs such as bones and your liver, brain, and kidneys
- test for other viruses—e.g. Epstein-Barr virus.