

Information about

Referral to the Head & Neck Specialist Team

Your General Practitioner (GP) or General Dental Practitioner (GDP) have made a referral to the hospital for you to be seen by the specialist head and neck team.

There are many explanations for the symptoms you may have been having, and if your GP/GDP has ruled out the most common problems, it is sometimes necessary for you to see one of our specialist consultants.

Some of the symptoms you have described could be caused by a cancer, and it is important that you are seen and assessed quickly- this is called the '2 week wait' appointment, you will be sent a letter asking you to come into the hospital to see one of the head and neck doctors in the outpatients department. You may like to take a family member or close friend to the appointment with you.

The doctor will take a full medical history and ask you about the signs and symptoms that you have been having. Your mouth throat and neck may be examined with a light and small mirror held at the back of your throat. The doctor may also pass a nasendoscope (a very thin flexible tube with a light at the end) into your nose to get a better view of the back of the mouth and throat- this can be a little uncomfortable, so the doctor may spray inside your throat and nose with some local anaesthetic to numb the area first. If you do have a local anaesthetic spray in your throat, you shouldn't eat or drink anything for about an hour afterwards, until your throat has lost the numb feeling.

Occasionally the doctor may be able to see an area inside your mouth or throat that does not look normal, if this is the case he/she may decide to take a small piece of the tissue, this is called a biopsy. If a biopsy is necessary you will be given a numbing injection into the area- like a dental injection before you have a filling- and the piece of tissue can be sent to the laboratory to be looked at under a microscope. You will be given another appointment to come back and hear the results of the biopsy usually after 1 week. Cancer in the head and neck is uncommon, and if found in the early stages is treatable.

It is very natural to feel unsure and worried by this referral, partners and family members often experience similar feelings. If you, or anyone close to you, want to talk to someone about your concerns please contact our head and neck specialist nurse.

Contacts:

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