

Do you want to know?

Cancer of the Larynx/Laryngectomy

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sheet 1/1

What is it?

Cancer of the larynx is a malignant tumor that may involve any part of the larynx but most commonly the vocal cords. Various types of laryngectomy (excision of larynx) are performed for initial or recurrent cancer of the larynx.

Total laryngectomy is performed for recurrent or persistent cancer following radiation therapy. An opening is performed in the trachea to allow for adequate breathing. Signs and symptoms of cancer of the larynx are: difficulty in breathing and swallowing, sensation of having a lump in the throat, hoarseness of voice, persistent cough, enlarged lymph nodes in the neck, and pain in the middle of the neck.

What do you need to know?

Drugs



Use the medications as prescribed by your physician.

Diet



- Refer to a dietitian to plan for a balanced diet.
- Drink extra fluids to prevent dryness of mouth and other body tissues.
- Increase humidity.

Activity



- Increase your activity gradually as tolerated.

Therapeutic Measures



- If an opening in the trachea is present, do suctioning of the respiratory secretions frequently as instructed by your nurse.
- The cannula present in the opening has to be cleaned frequently as instructed by your nurse.

- Cover the opening while bathing, be careful to keep soap and water from entering the cannula or opening.
- Cover the opening while shaving so that particles do not fall into it.
- Do not swim because water can enter the lungs through the opening.
- Keep the opening covered when you go outside to prevent cold air or dust from entering into the trachea.
- Consider consulting a speech therapist if requested by your physician.
- Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste at least after breakfast and at bed time to decrease dryness of the mouth.
- Report to your doctor in case of:
 - Difficulty in breathing
 - Bleeding at surgical site
 - Temperature above 38.5°C
 - Bad odor from the wound
 - Change in the wound secretions
 - Redness and tenderness at the surgical site

INSTRUCTIONS

The content of this educational leaflet is of general information. Ask your physician or health care provider if this content applies to you.

Prepared by the Nursing Services in coordination with other health care disciplines.