

PATIENT INFORMATION

Speech and Language Therapy Service

(Macmillan)

Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) support people with head and neck cancer throughout their treatment journey. They work alongside the head and neck cancer team to support individuals and their families to make choices about their treatment and recovery goals. SLT input may still be needed many years after the original treatment to help if you are having long term side effects of treatment.

SLTs can support you in the following ways:

- **Support people with head and neck cancer and their families before, during and after treatment.**
- **Provide assessment, diagnosis and treatment for swallowing difficulties –**
 - e.g. making changes to drinks or food
 - or helping you to swallow more easily and enjoy eating and drinking
 - or finding ways to help stop things going down the wrong way when you swallow (if this is a problem for you). This could be a head position or technique to use when swallowing to help food or drink to go down the right way.
- **Perform specialist swallowing assessments –**
 - e.g. a video x-ray of swallowing called video fluoroscopy **or** using a flexible camera passed through the nose to look into the throat and

assess swallowing. This is called fiberoptic endoscopic evaluation of swallowing (FEES)

- **Check if someone is able to swallow, cough, use their voice and clear their saliva properly –**
 - e.g. SLT assessments help hospital teams to decide whether a person's temporary breathing tube (tracheostomy tube) is ready to be removed after head and neck surgery. Not everyone needs a temporary breathing tube after head and neck surgery.

- **Help decide whether someone is able to meet their food and drink needs by mouth, if they may need help from a feeding tube or food or drink with extra nutrition.** The SLT will work closely with the person being assessed, dietitians, clinical nurse specialists and the rest of the healthcare team to reach these kinds of decisions.

- **Give clear recommendations of safest food textures or drink thickness based on the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) framework –** SLTs use the same ways of describing food and drink internationally.

- **SLTs can support you in ways of communicating –**
 - e.g. giving voice therapy after radiotherapy if your voice has been affected

- **Make rehabilitation programmes –**
 - e.g. help you to use equipment and do exercises which will help with swallowing, speech, voice, breathing or mouth opening
 - **or** give you exercises for the swallowing muscles to do before, during and after radiotherapy or surgery

- **Give information and support for people living with and beyond head and neck cancer treatment –**
 - e.g. putting you in touch with local and national cancer support groups and centres or other professionals (such as clinical psychology services) or online resources and patient conferences

- **Help to improve swallowing and communication for head and neck cancer patients by being involved in research and ways to make services or treatments better.**

Your Head and Neck Speech and Language Therapists are:
Sam Gregory & Sarah Champion 01803 654949

Useful Links

- [Cancer Research UK](#): A good source of statistics regarding cancer and information on the latest research including clinical trials open in the UK, cancer chat forum and nurse helpline, [information](#) on to how to find a counsellor, and advice on [how to support someone with cancer](#).
- [Get ahead Charitable Trust](#): Supporting those with head and neck cancer through education, treatment and research.
- [Get checked early](#): An online symptom checker, patient stories and information on head and neck cancer and what to do if you are worried about symptoms in yourself or others.
- [Head and Neck Cancer UK](#): Acts as an advocate for head and neck cancer patients and their families and provides information and advice on head and neck cancer including details of local support organisations.
- [Head and Neck Cancer Coalition UK](#): A group of 15 organisations working together to provide research, patient and carer support, change policy, improve services and increase awareness and education into head and neck cancer.
- [Macmillan Cancer Support](#): Provides useful information to support people with head and neck cancer and their families including details of symptoms, diagnosis, grading and stages of head and neck cancer and treatment options, online booklets in different languages, online support 24 hours a day, cancer forums and a helpline. [Macmillan have a YouTube channel](#) with videos on understanding cancer, personal stories and living with cancer. They have produced a [video](#) about speech therapy and voice restoration after cancer.
- [Heads2gether](#): An in person and virtual support meetings for patients and caregivers.
- [Maggie's](#): Provides online support regarding managing emotions, social and practical help e.g. with finances, managing symptoms and side effects and supporting someone with cancer. Maggie's Centres are specialist buildings across the UK with support specialists, psychologists, benefits advisors running drop-ins, support groups, courses and workshops for people affected by cancer.
- [Marie Curie](#): Information and support for people diagnosed with terminal illness.
- [Mouth Cancer Foundation](#): Raises awareness of mouth cancer through free information materials (available in different languages) provided to healthcare professionals, patients, carers and the general public, online patient and carers community forum and helpline, have produced a [cookbook](#) for people who have difficulty chewing or swallowing food.

- [National Association of Laryngectomee Clubs](#): Gives support for people with laryngectomy including information packs, online leaflets, a telephone helpline, newsletter, online meetings, local support groups, advocacy for people with laryngectomy and involvement with research projects. They have a [YouTube channel](#) of videos and resources and over 60 affiliated laryngectomy clubs.
- [National Tracheostomy Safety Project](#): Information and resources about tracheostomy or laryngectomy for patients, carers and for healthcare professionals to improve patient safety and care. They have a [YouTube channel](#) of their videos.
- [NHS website – head and neck cancer section](#): Head and neck cancer statistics, different types of head and neck cancer and links to further reliable sources of information. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde have produced a [video](#) on 'Care of Laryngectomy'.
- [Oracle Cancer Trust](#): Supports programmes and funds research into head and neck cancer
- [Relay UK](#): A service which can be set up for people to text 999 in case of an emergency, which can be useful for people unable to speak clearly on the phone.
- [Salivary Gland Cancer UK](#): A charity for those with rare salivary gland cancers. Support all patients, caregivers and clinicians treating rare salivary gland cancers. Holds regular hybrid gatherings to provide peer support, reliable information and opportunities to further research.
- [Sarcoma UK](#): Funding research and offering support for anyone affected by sarcoma cancer and campaigns for better treatments, Sarcoma UK is the only cancer charity in the UK focusing on all types of sarcoma.
- [Saving Faces: The Facial Surgery Research Foundation](#): Provides online information on surgical procedures, has a patient helpline and can put people in touch with people who have had facial surgery or changes in appearance due to treatment for support. Saving Faces is also involved in education and research to improve physical and psychological treatment for people with oral cancer.
- [Shout at Cancer](#): A charity specialising in speech training with music after laryngectomy, including breathing, singing, acting and beatbox exercises.
- [The Sunderland Cookbook Project](#): A cookbook by and for head and neck cancer patients to discover ways of enjoying food again, South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust and the University of Sunderland.
- [The Swallows Head and Neck Cancer Group](#): A 24/7 support line, monthly patient, caregiver and family members meetings (including virtual), organises international conferences for patients, carers and healthcare professionals. Has links to research projects to get involved with on the website.
- [Throat Cancer Foundation](#): Hosts a patient and cancer forum, information on throat cancer, treatment and care. They campaign for a 'Gold Standard of Care' for patients and improving post-treatment quality of life and are also involved with research.

- [Young Tongues](#): An international peer to peer support group made up of young people who have been diagnosed with Tongue Cancer or a cancer diagnosis that involves similar treatment. They connect via chat groups, virtual meet ups and social media and podcasts.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.