

Head and Neck Cancers



The Department of Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) - Head & Neck Surgery provides a wide range of surgical services for adult patients with ENT, head and neck diseases. Patients are referred from polyclinics, general practitioners, emergency services or transferred from other departments within the Ng Teng Fong General Hospital or other healthcare facilities, including nursing homes, community and other hospitals. Our team of highly-trained ENT-Head & Neck surgeons and allied healthcare professionals aim to provide the best possible care to our patients.

What are head and neck cancers?

Head and neck cancers are tumours that occur above the collarbone (except the brain and eye). They include cancers of the mouth, throat, nose, voice box, sinuses, ear and neck.

The most common head and neck cancer in Singapore is nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC) or nose cancer. Other common ones are voice box cancer, tongue cancer and throat cancer.

What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms include:

- Enlarged neck node
- Blocked ear and blood-stained phlegm
- Non-healing painless ulcer in the mouth
- Difficulty in swallowing
- Change in voice
- Prolonged sore throat



What are the risk factors?

The three most common risk factors are smoking, alcohol consumption and infection from certain viruses. The only head and neck cancer that can be passed through the genes is NPC.

Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption

There are 43 cancer-causing agents in cigarette smoke. Patients who smoke have an overall 12 times increased risk of getting cancers of the mouth, throat and voice box. This risk increases greatly for those who smoke and drink alcohol excessively.

Viruses

- NPC is caused by the Epstein Barr Virus (EBV). Infection with EBV through the saliva causes minor flu-like illness in children and occasionally a systemic disease called glandular fever in teenagers and young adults. How this virus subsequently causes NPC in people is not fully understood.
- The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is known to cause mouth, throat and voice box cancers. This virus is transmitted through sexual contact.



How is a diagnosis made?

Nasoendoscopy

A fibre-optic scope is inserted through the nose to visualise the nasal cavity, throat and voice box. A biopsy is done if suspicious-looking tissue is seen.

Imaging

CT and MRI scans are done to assess the extent of the disease for the purpose of cancer-staging.

Blood test

The EBV antibody serology is used to screen high-risk groups for NPC (first-degree relatives of NPC patients or when there is a high suspicion that a patient has NPC).

What are the treatment options?

Treatment methods include surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy or a combination of modalities. The cure rates are much better if cancer is detected early. Cases are usually presented at a tumour board meeting where surgeons, radiotherapists and chemotherapists will discuss the best possible treatment option.

Head and neck cancer surgeries are very complex, and require a multi-disciplinary surgical team effort. These cancers involve organs for our speech, breathing and swallowing, and surgery to remove the cancer can affect these important functions.

Every effort will be made to preserve the function of these organs through organ-sparing surgeries and tissue reconstruction. An integral aspect of the patient management post-surgery is voice, swallowing and psychological rehabilitation.

For more information

Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital

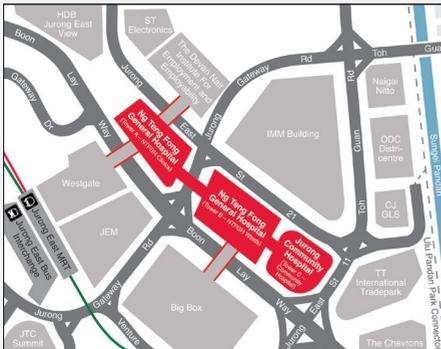
1 Jurong East St 21,
Singapore 609606
General enquiries: 6716 2000 Fax: 6716 5500
www.juronghealth.com.sg

Clinical and appointment line hours (closed on Sundays and public holidays)

For appointments, please call 6716 2222
Monday - Friday 8.00am - 5.30pm,
Saturday 8.00am - 12.30pm

For dental appointments, please call 6716 2233
Monday - Thursday 8.00am - 5.30pm
Friday 8.00am - 5.00pm

Getting there



By train

Jurong East MRT Station

By bus

From Jurong East Bus Interchange

SBS 51, 52, 66, 78, 79, 97, 97e, 98,
98M, 105, 143, 143M, 160, 183, 197,
333, 334, 335, 506

Along Boon Lay Way

SBS 99, Private bus service 625

Jurong Medical Centre

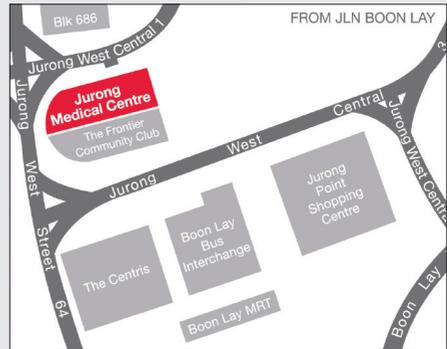
60 Jurong West Central 3,
Singapore 648346
General enquiries: 6716 2000 Fax: 6551 7999
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Getting there



By train

Boon Lay MRT Station

By bus

SBS 30, 79, 154, 157, 174, 179, 181,
182, 192, 193, 194, 198, 199, 240, 241,
242, 243 W/G, 246, 249, 251, 252, 254,
255, 257, 405
SMRT 172, 178, 180, 187

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