



Top 10 Tips for Head & Neck Cancer Patients Going Through Treatment

Practical advice and support during your treatment journey

Head & Neck Cancer

ABSTRACT

A supportive and practical guide designed to help head and neck cancer patients navigate the challenges of treatment. These top 10 tips focus on managing side effects, maintaining nutrition, protecting oral health, and staying emotionally supported throughout the journey. Written in patient-friendly language, the guide encourages early communication with healthcare teams, highlights the importance of swallowing and speech exercises, and reminds patients to stay connected and reach out for help when needed. It also includes information on 24/7 support and text services, ensuring nobody faces treatment alone.

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Head & Neck Cancer Survivor

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1. Stay Ahead of Pain and Side Effects

Don't wait for discomfort to become severe. Take medications exactly as prescribed by your medical team and report new symptoms early small changes can make a big difference.

2. Prioritise Nutrition and Hydration

Treatment can make eating difficult, but keeping your body fuelled is essential.

- Choose soft, high-calorie, high-protein foods.
- Sip fluids often.
- Ask for a dietitian referral early not when weight loss becomes an issue.

3. Maintain Oral and Dental Care

Your mouth and throat can change quickly during treatment.

- Keep your mouth clean with gentle rinses.
- Follow dental advice closely.
- Avoid alcohol-based mouthwashes.

4. Keep Your Skin Protected

Radiotherapy can make skin sensitive.

- Use only products approved by your clinical team.
- Avoid rubbing, shaving, or using heat on the treated area.
- Protect skin from the sun.

5. Communicate With Your Care Team

Your voice matters. Treatment is tough, and your team wants to support you. Tell them about:

- swallowing difficulties
- pain levels
- changes in taste or dry mouth
- emotional wellbeing

No issue is too small.

6. Don't Skip Swallowing and Speech Exercises

Even if it's uncomfortable, these exercises help maintain movement and reduce long-term difficulties. A speech and language therapist (SLT) can guide you.

7. Rest When You Need To

Fatigue is common and can be overwhelming.

- Pace yourself.
- Listen to your body.
- Short naps are fine don't push through exhaustion.

8. Stay Connected

You are not alone.

Talk to others going through similar experiences it helps emotionally and practically.

Support groups like The Swallows can make a huge difference.

Request a Support Box by emailing info@theswallows.org.uk don't forget your full name & address.

9. Look After Your Emotional Health

It's normal to feel anxious, low, or overwhelmed.

- Talk to someone you trust.
- Ask about counselling or wellbeing support.
- Celebrate small wins they matter.

10. Use Support Lines Whenever You Need Them

We are here for you, day or night.

- **24/7 Support Line:** 07504 725 059
- **Laryngectomy Text Service:** 07830 929 400

(include a number if you want it listed)

Reaching out is a sign of strength not weakness.