

---

## Head and Neck Cancer Team

# Chemotherapy for Head and Neck Cancer

There are many different types of head and neck cancers. Only a few types benefit from chemotherapy and the decision to recommend chemotherapy for a patient has to be taken on a case by case basis.

This leaflet will give you basic information about Chemotherapy treatment to the head and neck area. It will describe how Chemotherapy works, the reasons for using Chemotherapy and will discuss treatment recommendations briefly.

This information answers some of the common questions asked by our patients about this treatment. It aims to provide you with some of the information that applies to your individual care. It is important to remember that every case is different and this information is therefore not exhaustive and does not constitute medical advice.

A member of the Head and Neck Oncology Team will discuss any treatment that you require, with you. If you have any queries or require any further details about your treatment, you should contact a member of the team via the contact numbers listed in the advice section of this file.

## Reasons for giving Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy can be given for two reasons. Firstly, it can be given with the aim of eradicating a cancer completely. In this instance, the chemotherapy drugs are usually given along side a course of radiotherapy. In certain types of cancer it is thought that this combined approach to treatment can have beneficial results.

Alternatively, chemotherapy drugs can be used to help with the management of symptoms e.g. help with pain control, (this is known as palliative treatment). Your head and neck oncology team will explain the reasons for giving you chemotherapy, before you start your treatment.

## How Chemotherapy works

Chemotherapy is the use of anti-cancer (cytotoxic) drugs to destroy cancer cells. These drugs can be given individually or can be combined (combination chemotherapy).

## Treatment recommendations

The choice of chemotherapy drugs will depend on the site and type of cancer, and the current scientific evidence supporting the benefits of its use. Further written information about the two chemotherapy drugs most commonly used for treating head and neck cancer, can be obtained in Patient Information leaflets 5FU chemotherapy and Cisplatin chemotherapy.

This document is also available in other languages, large print and audio format upon request – 01223 216032 or [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Cantonese

આ દસ્તાવેજ વિનંતી કરવાથી બીજી ભાષાઓ, મોટા છાપેલા અક્ષરો અથવા ઓડિઓ રચનામાં પણ મળી રહેશે.

Gujarati

A richiesta questo documento è anche disponibile in altre lingue, a caratteri grandi e in formato audio.

Italian

ئەم بەلگەییە ھەرۆھە بە زمانەکانی کە، بە چاپی درشت و بە شریتی تەسجیل دەس دەکەویت

Kurdish

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔

Urdu



Addenbrooke's is smoke-free. Please do not smoke anywhere on the site.

For advice on quitting, contact your GP or the NHS smoking helpline free, 0800

169 0 169

Document history			
Authors	Head and Neck Cancer team		
Department	Oncology Box 193, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridge CB2 2QQ, <a href="http://www.addenbrookes.nhs.uk">www.addenbrookes.nhs.uk</a>		
Contact number	01223 245151		
Published	Mar 06	Review date	Annual
Reviewed and reissued no changes May 07			
File name	O:\Oncology\Q A\Forms\Patient information\Head and Neck\pi818_v1_General_Chemo_H&N.doc		
Version number	1	Trust Ref	PIN818