

CANCER PATHWAYS
Information for patients

IS-0492E

Procedures and tests for suspected head and neck cancer

You have been referred for assessment by the specialist health service because there is a suspicion of a cancer diagnosis. Specialised procedures and tests will determine whether or not you have cancer. If it is shown that you do have cancer, your treatment will be planned in consultation with you.

You have been referred for assessment via the Cancer pathway for head and neck cancer. The Cancer pathways are intended to give patients and relatives predictability and security and are national standardised pathways which are discipline-based. The aim is to speed up your assessment and the start of treatment and minimise waiting times, in order to make the assessment period as predictable and stress-free as possible for you.

The Cancer pathways define the number of calendar days that each part of the assessment should take. These are called pathway timescales. Pathway timescales are targets rather than absolute requirements. For some patients, there will be medical reasons why the Cancer pathway should be longer or shorter than the timescales stated in the national Cancer pathway.

• **Procedures and tests for suspected cancer**

The aim of the assessment and the procedures and tests you are about to undergo is to determine whether or not you have cancer. You may also be referred for assessment for a different illness. If the procedures and tests indicate that you have cancer, you will be given information on possible treatments and what will happen next. You will be told about the

procedures and tests that are relevant for you and when they will be carried out.

All hospitals that investigate and treat cancer patients have their own cancer pathway coordinators, who will make the necessary preparations for your pathway by booking appointments for your procedures and tests. You can contact the cancer pathway coordinator if you have any questions concerning practical matters relating to your assessment, appointments, etc. The cancer pathway coordinator is often a nurse, but he or she may also have a different professional background.

Medical questions will be answered by a doctor.

• **Assessment phases**

The assessment will normally be completed within 14 calendar days. For medical reasons, it may sometimes take longer. The assessment period is the period from receipt of your referral to the Cancer pathway by the hospital until the assessment has been completed and it has either been confirmed that you do not have cancer, or you have been given a diagnosis and a decision has been taken regarding your treatment. The timescales are defined in the Cancer pathway for head and neck cancer.

The various phases of the assessment	Comments	Recommended within	
<p>Phase 1: This is the period from receipt of your referral by the hospital until your first appointment for procedures and tests in the pathway</p>	<p>The cancer pathway coordinator will book the necessary appointments for your procedures and tests.</p>	<p>7 calendar days</p>	
<p>Phase 2: This is the period from your first appointment for your procedures and tests in the pathway until your assessment is completed</p>	<p>During this period, you will undergo procedures and tests to determine whether or not you have cancer.</p> <p>The actual procedures and tests that are carried out vary, but many patients undergo various X-ray scans. Some patients are also examined using an endoscope, a small optical tube which is passed down through the nose or throat in order to obtain a better overview of the area that is to be assessed. A tissue sample will often be taken to enable a diagnosis to be made.</p> <p>Once the results of the assessments are available, it will normally be possible to say whether or not you have cancer. A decision concerning your diagnosis will then be taken. If you do not have cancer, the Cancer pathway will be concluded.</p>	<p>7 calendar days</p>	
<p>Phase 3: This is the period from you being diagnosed as having cancer and completing all the tests and procedures in the pathway until the start of your treatment</p>	<p>If you have cancer, the best treatment for you will now be planned. Any decision concerning your treatment will be taken in consultation with you, normally based on an assessment by a multidisciplinary team.</p> <p>For patients with head and neck cancer, the treatment will generally be surgical treatment, chemotherapy or radiotherapy, either alone or in combination.</p>	<p>Surgical treatment</p>	<p>14 calendar days</p>
		<p>Medicinal treatment</p>	<p>14 calendar days</p>
		<p>Radiotherapy</p>	<p>14 calendar days</p>

Patients with head and neck cancer will normally start treatment within 28 calendar days from the date on which the hospital receives the referral. For medical reasons, it may sometimes take longer. Your doctor will tell you what to expect and give you more information on your Cancer pathway.

For more information, visit helsenorge.no. The hospital that assesses you will also have information on its website.

Notes