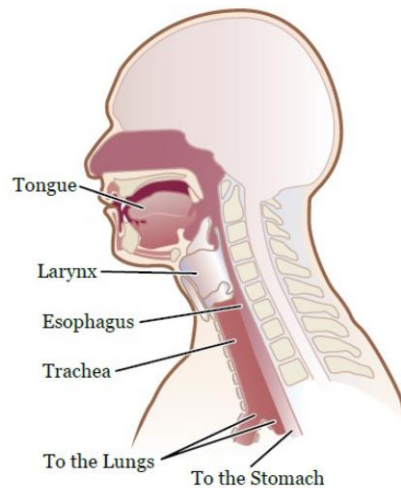


Getting the most out of your swallowing after head and neck cancer treatment

Your swallowing muscles are often affected by your head and neck cancer and its treatments – both surgery and radiotherapy.

It is critical to fight against the effects of scarring and fibrosis to make sure your swallowing is safe, you eat a healthy balanced diet and, most importantly, you still enjoy your meals. The effects of radiotherapy unfortunately continue for years and exercises need to become part of your daily routine.



Early days – ‘swallow every day’

During treatment, the most important thing is to swallow **something** every day. Your speech therapist will meet you before treatment and as often as needed throughout treatment and will support you to try and keep the swallowing muscles going.

Don't be tempted to avoid pain relief – it's better to have your pain in control and to be keeping swallowing your saliva and small amounts of food / drinks.

After treatment – ‘stretch and exercise’

You will be recommended a set of exercises based on the treatment you received and the results of your swallowing assessments.

These may focus on your lips, jaw, tongue, palate, throat and / or voice box.

Exercises needs to be done daily.



Massage, stretching and exercise is the key to reduce fluid build up (lymphoedema).

Jaw opening is critical and jaw stretching should be completed daily



Auckland ENT will be in touch to arrange regular appointments to ensure you are well supported and informed.

Please contact us if you have any questions or new concerns.

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