Treatment Journey Resource Guide

This guide is a downloadable version of the Treatment Journey Map available on the website. It covers the same phases and resources, organized here so you can read through at your own pace, share with loved ones, or bring to appointments with your care team.



How to use this

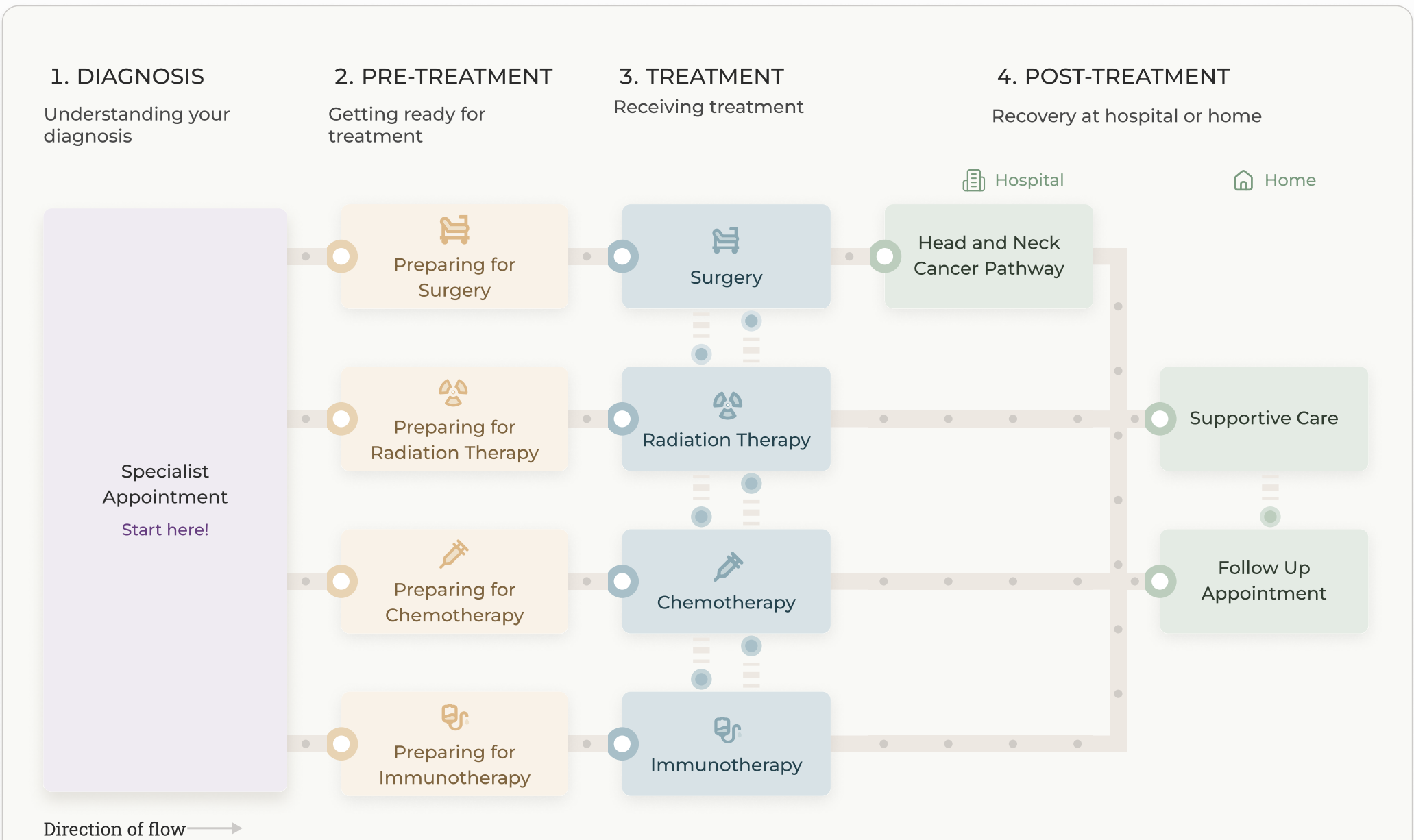
This guide is organized by phase, starting at diagnosis. Use the map below to jump to a phase that feels relevant to you right now, or read straight through from beginning to end.

Each phase includes what to expect and the resources available to support you in your cancer treatment journey.



Looking Ahead

Cancer Treatment at a Glance



Phase 1 of 4

Diagnosis

This is the when your medical team will confirm that you have cancer. This phase often includes tests, scans, biopsies, and consultations to confirm the type of cancer you have, where it is located, and how advanced it is (the "stage"). This phase can feel overwhelming. All this information is needed to plan the best path forward for your treatment. Usually you will have a visit with an oncologist or surgeon to review all of the findings from these tests.

Specialist Appointment

After your initial diagnosis, you will be referred to one or more specialists to review your case in detail. Depending on your type and stage of cancer, this may include a head and neck surgeon, a medical oncologist, or a radiation oncologist. These appointments are an opportunity to learn more about your diagnosis, understand your treatment options, and begin building your care team. Your specialists will work together to determine the best path forward for you.

Questions for your care team

- What type of cancer do I have, and what stage is it? What does that stage mean for me?
- How long is the wait for additional tests, and what is the risk of waiting?
- What should I read or research to better understand my diagnosis?
- How aggressive is this type of cancer?
- Will I need additional tests (imaging, biopsies, molecular or genetic testing) to confirm or clarify the diagnosis?
- What is the prognosis — 2 year, 5 year, 10 year?

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

BOOKLET

Newly Diagnosed with Cancer: Information and Resources to Help Patients and Families Be Active in their Cancer Care

A Cancer Care Alberta booklet for those newly diagnosed with cancer, covering what to expect, how to navigate the healthcare system, understanding your diagnosis, treatment planning, and available supports.

BOOKLET

Head and Neck Cancer: Information and Resources for Patients and Families

A Cancer Care Alberta patient booklet covering head and neck cancer treatment options, side effect management, and recovery tips for patients and their families. You may have received this from your doctor when you were diagnosed with head and neck cancer.

DOCUMENT

Diagnosis and Staging of Head and Neck Cancer

A Cancer Care Alberta document that explains some of the tests you will have to help with diagnosing your cancer including how to determine the "stage" of your cancer.

INTERACTIVE MODULE

In Between Getting a Cancer Diagnosis and Your First Cancer Care Appointment

A Cancer Care Alberta interactive online module to help patients navigate the uncertain period between a cancer diagnosis and their first cancer care appointment, offering guidance on what to expect, how to prepare, and where to find support.

RESOURCES (Continued)

PROGRAM
Patient Navigation

An Cancer Care Alberta program where registered nurses help patients and families navigate the cancer care system, providing information, explaining test results and treatment options, coordinating care, and connecting patients to financial and community supports. This may not be available at all sites and your healthcare provider will need to submit a referral on your behalf.

RESOURCE LIST
Head and Neck Cancer Alberta Resource List

A quick list of resources and supports from Alberta Health Services. These resources include services for during treatment, rehabilitation, and community support.

SUPPORT GROUP
Head and Neck Cancer Support Group (Edmonton)

Connect with other head and neck or esophageal cancer survivors and care partners who understand the challenges of recovery. This peer support group provides a safe space to share experiences, learn from others, access helpful resources, and find support throughout treatment and recovery.

SERVICES
Health Link 811

A free Alberta Health Services telephone service available 24/7, connecting Albertans with registered nurses and other health professionals for symptom triage, health advice, system navigation, and referrals to clinical services. Call 811.

SUPPORT GROUP
Wellspring Cancer Support

A free, no-referral-needed organization that has emotional, social, and practical support programs for people living with cancer, their caregivers, and families — available online and in-person across Alberta.

DICTIONARY
Jargon Buster

Learn about what certain medical terminology mean.

Contact and Support

If you have questions or need support, you can contact your care team anytime.

Arthur Child Contact Card
Arthur Child: 587-231-3100
Arthur Child Toll-Free: 1-844-465-6330

Cross Cancer Institute Contact Card
Cross Cancer Institute: 780-432-8771
Triage: 825-394-2277
Triage Toll-Free: 1-877-707-4848
Radiation Appointments: 825-394-2288

What's next?

After the diagnosis phase, you'll likely require more visits, scans, and tests to prepare for your treatment(s). Your care team will guide you through this transition and help you prepare for what's ahead.



Phase 2 of 4

Pre-Treatment

In this phase, your care team works with you to plan and prepare you for your treatment. It often includes consultations with specialists, decisions about which treatment approach is right for you, and any preparation needed before treatment begins— such as dental work, immunizations, or meeting with a speech pathologist. This phase can feel like a lot of information at once. This is an important phase to make sure you and your team are fully prepared before moving forward with your treatment.

Preparing for Surgery

Before surgery, patients attend appointments with a variety of healthcare providers and may need lab or imaging tests to plan the operation and prepare safely. Your team will explain what will happen and how to get ready at home.

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

- Surgeon
- Nurses
- Anesthesiologist
- Dentist
- Radiology
- Pathology

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

BOOKLET

Head and Neck Cancer: Information and Resources for Patients and Families

A Cancer Care Alberta patient booklet covering head and neck cancer treatment options, side effect management, and recovery tips for patients and their families. You may have received this from your doctor when you were diagnosed with head and neck cancer.

APP

My Care Conversations App

An Alberta Health Services app to help patients prepare for and engage in meaningful conversations with their healthcare team about their care and treatment goals.

BOOKLET

Surgery for Head and Neck Cancer

A Cancer Care Alberta patient booklet covering what to expect before, during, and after head and neck cancer surgery, including types of surgery, reconstruction, managing side effects, and recovery at home.

SERVICES

AHS Nutrition Counselling

Registered Dietitian education and counselling services for cancer patients, including pre-treatment nutrition optimization.

Questions for your care team

- For each option (surgery, radiation, chemo, immunotherapy, targeted therapy): how successful is it, who performs it, and what does it involve?
- What are my treatment options, and which do you recommend — and why?
- Am I eligible for any clinical trials? What are the risks and benefits of participating?
- Is any dental work recommended before treatment begins? Can you recommend a dentist experienced with head and neck radiation patients?
- What would you do if this were you or someone you love?
- What does success look like for my treatment plan and how will we measure it?
- Who will be on my care team, and how will they coordinate with each other?

RESOURCES (Continued)

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Contact and Support

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Richmond Road Diagnostic and Treatment Centre Information

Head and Neck Surgery Clinic – *Calgary*: 403-955-8376

Kaye Edmonton Clinic Information

Head and Neck Surgery Clinic– *Edmonton*: 780-407-8355

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Arthur Child: 587-231-3100

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Triage: 825-394-2277

Triage Toll-Free: 1-877-707-4848

Preparing for Radiation Therapy

Before radiation starts, patients will have lab tests and imaging tests, and may need to see other specialists, like dentists, to help protect healthy tissue during radiation treatments. Your care team will explain how treatment works and describe potential side effects to expect.

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

- Radiation Oncologist
- Nurses
- Dentist
- Dietician
- Speech Language Pathologist

Contact and Support

If you have questions or need support, you can contact your care team anytime.

Central Alberta Cancer Centre Radiation Treatment Contact Card

- Radiation Appointments: 403-406-8449
- For Symptom Concerns: 403-343-4526

Cross Cancer Institute Contact Card

- Radiation Appointments: 825-394-2288
- For Symptom Concerns (Mon-Fri): 780-432-8401
- For Symptom Concerns (Sat-Sun): 825-394-2277

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

INTERACTIVE MODULE
Radiation Treatment Video Series

A Cancer Care Alberta video series where radiation healthcare providers and patients explain what to expect during radiation treatment.

SERVICES
AHS Nutrition Counselling

Registered Dietitian education and counselling services for cancer patients, including pre-treatment nutrition optimization.

RESOURCE LIST
Head and Neck Cancer Alberta Resource List

A quick list of resources and supports from Alberta Health Services. These resources include services for during treatment, rehabilitation, and community support.

SUPPORT GROUP
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INTERACTIVE MODULE
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An Alberta Health Services app to help patients prepare for and engage in meaningful conversations with their healthcare team about their care and treatment goals.

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DICTIONARY
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Preparing for Chemotherapy

Before starting chemotherapy, patients will have blood work and other assessments to ensure the treatment is safe and appropriate. Your team will explain the chemo plan and how to manage side effects. schedule, how the chemotherapy will be given, and ways to manage side effects.

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

- Medical Oncologist
- Nurses
- Dietician
- Supportive Care

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

BOOKLET

Systemic Treatment: Chemotherapy, Targeted Therapy and Hormone Therapy

A Cancer Care Alberta patient booklet explaining the different types of systemic cancer treatments (chemo), what to expect at appointments, how to manage medications safely at home, and how to recognize and respond to common side effects.

APP

My Care Conversations App

An Alberta Health Services app to help patients prepare for and engage in meaningful conversations with their healthcare team about their care and treatment goals.

SERVICES

Health Link 811

A free Alberta Health Services telephone service available 24/7, connecting Albertans with registered nurses and other health professionals for symptom triage, health advice, system navigation, and referrals to clinical services. Call 811.

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VIDEO SERIES & ONLINE CLASS

Systemic Treatment Video Series & Online Class

A Cancer Care Alberta resource, including videos and an online class where healthcare providers and patients explain what systemic treatment (chemo) is, what to expect at appointments, how to manage side effects, and how to live well during treatment.

SERVICES

AHS Nutrition Counselling

Registered Dietitian education and counselling services for cancer patients, including pre-treatment nutrition optimization.

RESOURCE LIST

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Preparing for Immunotherapy

Before immunotherapy, patients will complete lab tests like bloodwork or biopsies to confirm that the treatment is safe and appropriate. Your team will explain the immunotherapy works, the plan and how to manage side effects.

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

- Medical Oncologist
- Nurses
- Dietician
- Supportive Care

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

BOOKLET

Checkpoint Inhibitors: : Information for Patients and Families

A Cancer Care Alberta booklet specifically for patients receiving checkpoint inhibitor immunotherapy, covering how it works, what to expect at appointments, unique immune-related side effects, and how to manage them.

SERVICES

AHS Nutrition Counselling

Registered Dietitian education and counselling services for cancer patients, including pre-treatment nutrition optimization.

RESOURCE LIST

Head and Neck Cancer Alberta Resource List

A quick list of resources and supports from Alberta Health Services. These resources include services for during treatment, rehabilitation, and community support.

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What's next?

After the pre-treatment phase, you'll move into the treatment phase. Your care team will guide you through what to expect and help you feel as ready as possible.

Phase 3 of 4

Treatment

Your treatment is underway. Treatment for head and neck cancer may include surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, or a combination of these and other treatments. This phase can be physically and emotionally demanding. Your care team will be monitoring you closely and supporting you every step of the way.



Questions for your care team

- What are the most likely side effects of my treatment, and how can they be managed?
- How will we know if the treatment is working? What tests or scans will be used? What happens if the treatment is not working?
- How will treatment affect my ability to eat, chew, swallow, breathe, or speak?
- What happens if this treatment stops working or causes too many side effects? What are the next options?
- How will this affect my daily life and when might I start to feel like myself again?
- How do I know when a side effect is not normal and needs attention? What is the process for reporting concerns, so I feel heard by the team?
- Who should I contact if I have questions — especially after hours or in an emergency?

What's next?

After completing this phase, you'll move into post-treatment. Your care team will let you know what follow-up care looks like and what to expect as you recover.

Surgery

During surgery, cancer will be removed while the care team works to preserve the normal function and appearance of your healthy structures as much as possible. After surgery, patients will recover in the hospital so that pain, nutrition, and healing can be carefully monitored.

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

- Surgeon
- Nurses
- Anesthesiologist
- Dentist
- Dietician
- Speech Language Pathologist
- Dietician
- Physiatry or Cancer Rehabilitation
- Pathology
- Supportive Care

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

DOCUMENT
Head and Neck Surgery Pathway

A day-by-day Alberta Health Services care pathway outlining what patients can expect from the day of head and neck surgery through to discharge, including nutrition, activity, wound care, medications, and tracheotomy management.

RESOURCE LIST
Head and Neck Cancer Alberta Resource List

A quick list of resources and supports from Alberta Health Services. These resources include services for during treatment, rehabilitation, and community support.

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Head and Neck Cancer Support Group (Edmonton)

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SERVICES
Health Link 811

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DICTIONARY
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Radiation Therapy

Radiation therapy usually happens over several weeks during daily visits to a clinic. Patients often notice side effects from radiation that get worse over time. The care team will check in regularly, and offer symptom support.

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

- Radiation Oncologist
- Nurses
- Dentist
- Speech Language Pathologist
- Dietician
- Supportive Care

Contact and Support

If you have questions or need support, you can contact your care team anytime.

Central Alberta Cancer Centre Radiation Treatment Contact Card

- Radiation Appointments: 403-406-8449
- For Symptom Concerns: 403-343-4526

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RESOURCES AVAILABLE

DOCUMENT

Head and Neck Surgery Pathway

A day-by-day Alberta Health Services care pathway outlining what patients can expect from the day of head and neck surgery through to discharge, including nutrition, activity, wound care, medications, and tracheotomy management.

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SUPPORT GROUP

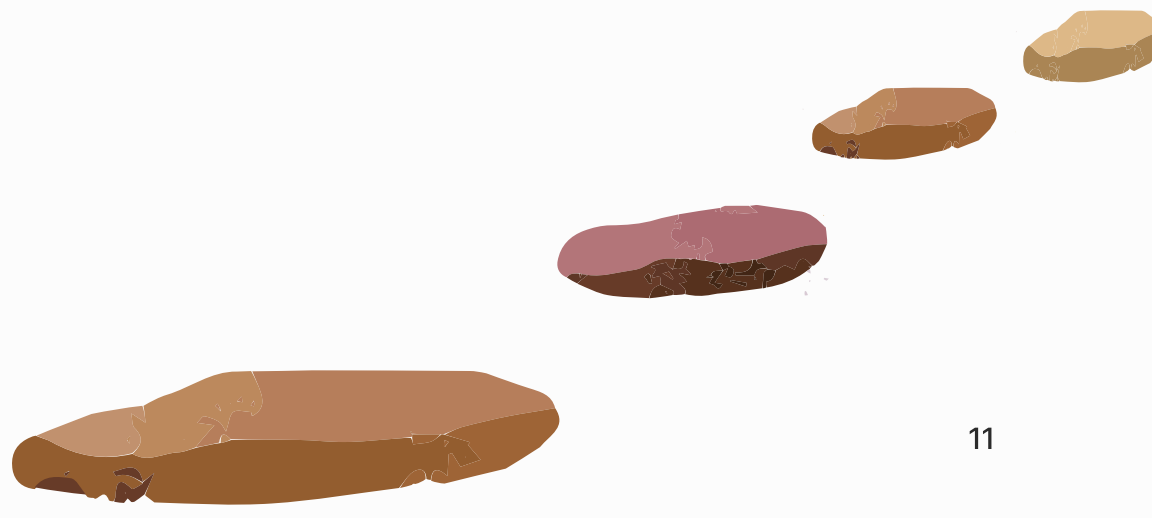
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DICTIONARY

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Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is provided in cycles with rest periods in-between, usually in outpatient clinics. Patients are monitored carefully for side effects, and may need more blood tests and clinic visits than usual to ensure patient safety.

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

- Medical Oncologist
- Nurses
- Dietician
- Physiatry or Cancer Rehabilitation
- Supportive Care

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

BOOKLET
Checkpoint Inhibitor and Chemotherapy

A Cancer Care Alberta patient booklet for those receiving both checkpoint inhibitor and chemotherapy, covering what these treatments are, possible side effects, and how to manage them at home.

VIDEO SERIES
Managing Symptoms & Side Effects

A Cancer Care Alberta resource, including videos about common systemic treatment (chemo) side effects including fatigue, nausea, hair loss, and mouth sores, with advice from oncology nurses, dietitians, and patients on how to manage them.

SERVICES
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TRACKING TOOL
Keeping Track of Your Symptoms on Chemotherapy and Targeted Therapy

A Cancer Care Alberta symptom tracking tool that helps patients monitor and rate common chemotherapy side effects such as fever, nausea, and vomiting, with clear guidance on when to call their healthcare team or go to the emergency room.

VIDEO SERIES & ONLINE CLASS
Emergency Triage Letter for Febrile Neutropenia

A Cancer Care Alberta letter for patients to bring to the emergency room if they develop a fever during chemotherapy, alerting ER staff that the patient is at risk for febrile neutropenia and outlining recommended assessment and treatment.

RESOURCE LIST
Head and Neck Cancer Alberta Resource List

A quick list of resources and supports from Alberta Health Services. These resources include services for during treatment, rehabilitation, and community support.

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Head and Neck Cancer Support Group (Edmonton)

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Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy is provided during clinic appointments, and the care team will monitor patients closely for side effects. Immunotherapy treatments may need to be adjusted if there are serious side effects.

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

- Medical Oncologist
- Nurses
- Dietician
- Physiatry or Cancer Rehabilitation
- Supportive Care

Contact and Support

If you have questions or need support, you can contact your care team anytime.

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WEBPAGE

Systemic Treatment Page — Immunotherapy Section (AHS)

The Cancer Care Alberta systemic treatment webpage with links to all immunotherapy-specific patient resources including checkpoint inhibitor booklets, CAR T-cell therapy information, and bispecific antibody resources.

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Head and Neck Cancer Alberta Resource List

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Phase 4 of 4

Post-Treatment

This is the phase that begins once your active treatment has ended. It includes follow-up appointments, monitoring for recurrence, and ongoing rehabilitation such as speech therapy or physiotherapy. While this phase can bring a mix of relief and uncertainty, your care team remains involved to support your recovery and long-term wellbeing.

Questions for your care team

- What is the typical recurrence rate for this cancer, and how soon can it return? How can I stay vigilant — including through self-examination?
- From your experience, what are the top 3 things patients who recover well have done to help themselves?
- What should I start doing — or stop doing — to support my recovery?
- What emotional or mental health support is available to me and my caregivers after treatment?
- Who will be coordinating my follow-up care, and what will that look like?
- What follow-up tests will I need, and how often?

HOSPITAL

Head and Neck Cancer Pathway

These resources are specific to the period following head and neck surgery. **If your treatment plan does not include surgery, this section may not apply to you.**

WHO'S ON YOUR TEAM?

- Surgeon
- Nurses
- Anesthesiologist
- Dentist
- Pathology
- Speech Language Pathologist
- Dietician
- Physiatry or Cancer Rehabilitation
- Supportive Care

RESOURCE AVAILABLE

RESOURCE

Head and Neck Surgery Pathway

A day-by-day Alberta Health Services care pathway outlining what patients can expect from the day of head and neck surgery through to discharge, including nutrition, activity, wound care, medications, and tracheotomy management.

HOME

Supportive Care

Supportive care resources to help you as you recover from head and neck cancer treatment.

RESOURCE AVAILABLE

WEBSITE

Head and Neck Cancer Care Instructions

A MyHealth Alberta patient handout about how to care for yourself at home during or after head and neck cancer treatment, including when to get medical help.

TOOLKIT

Taking Care of Myself: A Guide for When I Leave the Hospital

A guide designed to help patients understand their discharge plan, manage medications, follow up with their care team, and know what to do if a problem arises after leaving the hospital.

STORIES

Digital Storytelling

Hear from patient and/or caregivers about their experience through their stories about going through their cancer journey

BOOKLET

After Treatment: Information and Resources to Help You Set Priorities and Take Action

A Cancer Care Alberta booklet supporting patients after finishing cancer treatment. It includes follow-up care, managing side effects, medications, mental wellbeing, and strategies for living well beyond cancer.

BOOKLET

Mouth and Dental Care

A Cancer Care Alberta patient booklet on maintaining oral health during and after cancer treatment, with a focus on recognizing and dealing with side effects such as dry mouth, mouth sores, jaw stiffness, and taste changes.

POST-SURGERY RESOURCES

EXERCISES

Jaw and Neck Exercises

A Cancer Care Alberta patient handout with illustrated exercises to prevent and manage jaw and neck stiffness following head and neck cancer surgery or radiation treatment, including guidance on posture and shoulder exercises.

SERVICES

Rehabilitation Oncology

A Cancer Care Alberta program for occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology, and physiatry to help cancer patients manage lasting treatment effects such as fatigue, peripheral neuropathy, swallowing changes, and reduced mobility — available in-person and virtually.

POST-IMMUNOTHERAPY RESOURCES

BOOKLET

Immunotherapy Side Effects — Immune Checkpoint Inhibitors

A patient-friendly guide from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network covering how to recognize and manage immune-related side effects that can occur during and after checkpoint inhibitor treatment, including what treatments may be used and when to seek urgent care.

HOME

Follow Up Appointment

Resources to help you schedule and prepare for your follow-up appointments after head and neck cancer treatment.

Contact and Support

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RESOURCE AVAILABLE

WEBSITE/TOOLKIT/STORIES/BOOKLET ETC.

Name and Link

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WEBSITE/TOOLKIT/STORIES/BOOKLET ETC.

Name and Link

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