

### **What to look for...**

As with most cancers, in the beginning, throat cancer does not cause any symptoms. The early warning signs are similar to the symptoms of a chest cold.

Symptoms caused by a tumour in the upper or lower throat may include:

- nagging cough.
- hoarseness.
- persistent sore throat.
- difficulty swallowing.
- traces of blood in mucus.
- pain in ears.
- swollen lymph nodes.

Additional symptoms resulting from a tumour directly behind the nose may include:

- partial hearing loss.
- nasal obstruction
- nosebleeds.
- ringing in the ears.
- middle ear infection type symptoms.

The throat is the hollow tube that allows food and liquids to pass from the mouth to the stomach. It also lets air travel to and from the lungs. The throat is divided into three distinct sections: the area behind the nose; behind the mouth (including the tonsils) and the lower throat.

Cancers of the throat most often develop in the cells of the mucous membrane lining the throat. Eventually if left untreated, the abnormal cells penetrate through to the surrounding tissues. It is relatively easy for the cancer to spread from here to the lymph nodes in the neck, then on to the other organs.

A growing tumour may interfere the senses and swallowing. Unfortunately, cancers of the nose area and lower throat often spread early, before symptoms are apparent. Cancers behind the mouth will usually not spread to much at first.

### **Causes**

There are some risk factors associated with throat cancer. These are smoking and heavy drinking of alcohol. These cause most cancers in and around the mouth region. Another cause of cancer is the prevalence of a virus - a type of herpes virus.

Also subjecting yourself to coal or other mineral dust, asbestos, and diesel fumes may further increase the chances of sustaining throat cancer. Poor oral hygiene and regular consumption of salted meats may also contribute.

### **Traditional Treatments**

Provided the throat cancer is detected early enough, treatment usually will work to remove the cancer. This is provided that the cancer has not spread beyond lymph nodes by this time. There are a number of risks associated with this type of cancer, it being the area that allows the patient to speak, eat and perform other necessary purposes.

The exact type of treatment usually depends on the severity of the cancer and its location. Radiation treatment is usually performed and usually cures most cancers in this area.

If the cancer does not respond adequately or is too far advanced, surgery is necessary together with chemotherapy.

### **Personal Care**

If radiation treatment causes discomfort try the following -

- Ask your radiation specialist about medications and advice on how to ease side effects.
- Eat soft or liquid foods and drinks throughout the day.

### **Prevention**

- Stop smoking .
- Avoid drinking too much alcohol.

**When to seek further professional advice**

- you notice any of the symptoms listed above.
- you are a heavy smoker and or drinker - have a thorough examination from your doctor to rule out any possible problems.