

**Department of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery  
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***Patient Advice Sheet about Excision of, or cutting out, Lumps in the Neck.***

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***Why do I have a neck lump?***

There are many causes for neck lumps. For example, persistent infection, TB, cysts, a lump of fibrous tissue or fat (known as a fibrolipoma) or growths of many different sorts. We will tell you what we think it may be.

***What is excision?***

It just means cutting something out.

***Do I need what is to be removed or not?***

No.

***Why do I need the operation?***

It depends on the lump. We will tell you. It may be for these reasons.

- To find out what the lump is.
- To get rid of the lump.
- To stop the disease spreading.
- To improve the look of your neck.

***Do I have to have this operation.***

No. It is your choice. We call this elective.

***What will happen if I do not have this operation?***

Without surgery the lump will stay. It may not change. It may get worse or spread. If this happens the operation may be more difficult. The lump may become untreatable. We will tell you what we think.

***Why do I need the operation immediately?***

It depends on the lump. We will tell you. It may be for these reasons.

- To find out what is wrong as soon as possible.
- To stop things getting worse.
- To get treatment as soon as possible if it is needed.

***Do I need to take any particular care before my operation?***

No.

***How is the operation done?***

If the lump is small, it can be cut out with a local anaesthetic. You are awake. We inject the skin around the lump. This stops you feeling any pain. We may operate with you asleep. This is called general anaesthesia. You are taken to the anaesthetic room. You will be made to sleep by an anaesthetist. They are doctors who specialize in this. They will explain the anaesthetic to you. When you are asleep we take you into the theatre. The operation is not always the same. It depends on the size of the lump. And

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on where it is and what it is. Usually we cut the skin. We find the lump. We separate the lump and the normal tissue. We remove the lump. We may put a plastic tube called a drain in wound. It is to let any blood out. We usually remove it next day. It can be later.

### ***How long does the operation take?***

About three-quarters of an hour to an hour.

### ***How long do the results take?***

The lump is usually looked at with a microscope. This is called histology. It can be done quickly in half an hour. This is called a frozen section. The tissue is frozen and sliced thinly. It is not as good as a paraffin section. This takes a week or so. We may need to send tissue off for a further look.

### ***Are there any problems with the operation?***

Serious problems are uncommon. All operations have risks. Some can be serious. Usually nothing happens.

If there is a lot of bleeding afterwards we may need to open the wound to stop the blood pressing on your windpipe. We then take you back to theatre. We stop the bleeding. We sew up the wound again.

You may get an infection. Usually this settles with antibiotics.

We can damage a nerve. Which nerve depends where the lump is. If it's low down, it's the nerve to your shoulder. Under your jaw, the nerve to the corner of the mouth. Or the nerve to your voice box. Or your tongue. We will tell you which one we could damage. We take every care not to damage nerves.

### ***Will my neck be sore?***

Only a little

### ***What will my neck look like?***

There will be a scar but this will fade. This will take some months. It should end up pale and not easy to see.

### ***Will the lump come back?***

This depends what it is. We will tell you when we see you after the operation.

### ***Are there any stitches? When do they come out? Who takes them out?***

There may be. We may use glue or dissolving stitches. We do not need to remove them.

We may use staples. They look odd. But the skin heals very well.

We may use stitches which do not dissolve. We remove them and staples in 5-7 days. The nurse at your doctors' may do this for you.

### ***When can I go home?***

The same evening or the next day.

### ***What decides when I can go home?***

- The size of the lump.
- Where it is.

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- If we use a drain or not.
- Your age and health.
- How you feel.

### ***Will my neck be sore?***

Probably only a little

### ***What will my neck look like?***

There will be a scar but this will fade. This will take some months. It should end up pale and not easy to see.

### ***What decides how long will I be off work?***

- The size of the lump.
- Where it was.
- How you feel afterwards.

It may be after 24 hours if you feel up to it.  
We will give you a sick note.

### ***What can I do afterwards?***

Any light activity for a week or two.

### ***When can I have a shower?***

Next day but don't have a bath for 2-3 days to let the wound heal a bit.

### ***When will you see me again after I go home?***

In a week or two.

### ***Will I need any more treatment after the operation?***

You may not. It depends on what the lump is. We will tell you as soon as we know.

### ***May I ask a question?***

At any time. You can also refuse to have the operation at any time. If you ask a question please ask someone suitable. A junior doctor or nurse may not know what you want to know. Please do not ask several doctors the same question and compare answers.