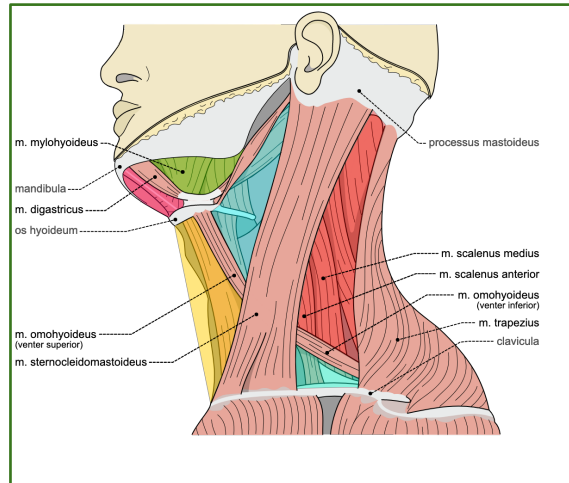




Wayne J. Harsha, MD

NECK MASSES

The following has been adapted from the American Academy of Otolaryngology website. The full articles may be found here: <https://www.enthealth.org/conditions/evaluation-of-neck-mass-in-adults/>



A neck mass is an abnormal lump in the neck. Neck lumps or masses can be any size—large enough to see and feel, or they can be very small.

A neck mass may be a sign of an infection, or it may indicate a serious medical condition. It does not necessarily mean you have cancer, but it does mean you may need additional evaluation to receive an accurate diagnosis.

The following symptoms are concerning for the possibility of a more significant health problem:

- The mass lasts longer than two to three weeks
- The mass gets larger
- The mass gets smaller but does not completely go away
- Voice change
- Trouble or pain with swallowing
- Trouble hearing or ear pain on the same side as the neck mass
- Neck or throat pain
- Unexplained weight loss
- Nasal blockage in one side of the nose

2032 Medical Park Drive, Newberry, SC 29108

Phone: (803) 630-5353

Fax: (803) 630-5343

<http://www.carolinapinesent.com>



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- Breathing difficulty
- Bleeding from nose and oral cavity
- Coughing up blood
- Skin lesion on the face or scalp that is growing or changing color

What Are the Diagnostic and Treatment Options?

Your doctor will ask about your medical history, and examine your head and neck. They may perform (or recommend) an endoscopy, which is a procedure that inserts a small tube with an attached camera through your nose to look inside your throat, voice box, and the opening of your esophagus. If a more detailed examination is required, the endoscopy will be performed in an operating room under anesthesia.

In addition, your doctor may order tests to help diagnose your neck mass, such as a CT, MRI, or PET (positron emission tomography) scan (if needed) to get a more detailed picture of the neck mass than normal X-rays can provide.

A biopsy involves taking a sample of tissue from the neck mass to make a diagnosis. There are different types of biopsies based on your medical history and the location of your mass, including:

- *Fine needle aspiration biopsy (FNA)*—An FNA is the best initial test to diagnose a neck mass. A small needle is put into the mass and tissue is pulled out. An FNA is often done in your doctor's office. It is well-tolerated by most patients. It can be done with or without ultrasound-guided needle biopsy.
- *Core biopsy*—A core biopsy is another way to diagnose a neck mass, typically performed if an FNA did not confirm a diagnosis. A core biopsy uses a slightly larger needle and gets a larger piece of tissue. It is well tolerated and has a low risk of complications.
- *Open biopsy*—An open biopsy should typically be done only after FNA and/or core biopsy have failed to make the diagnosis. It is the next step to diagnose a neck mass. It is a more invasive procedure. Open biopsy is done by a surgeon in the operating room and you will need anesthesia. An open biopsy may remove only portion of the mass or the whole mass. Because open biopsies are more invasive, there is a somewhat higher risk for complications.

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Your doctor will explain next steps and discuss a follow-up plan once a diagnosis has been made. If the neck mass is found to be cancerous, treatment options include surgery, radiation therapy with or without chemotherapy, or a combination of these treatments depending on the diagnosis and stage of the disease. Some neck masses may be thought to be benign (not cancerous) at first, but are later found to be cancer, which is why a follow-up plan is so important. You and your doctor need to discuss the method for follow-up that works best for you. You should call for your results if you have not heard from the doctor or do not have a follow up appointment.

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