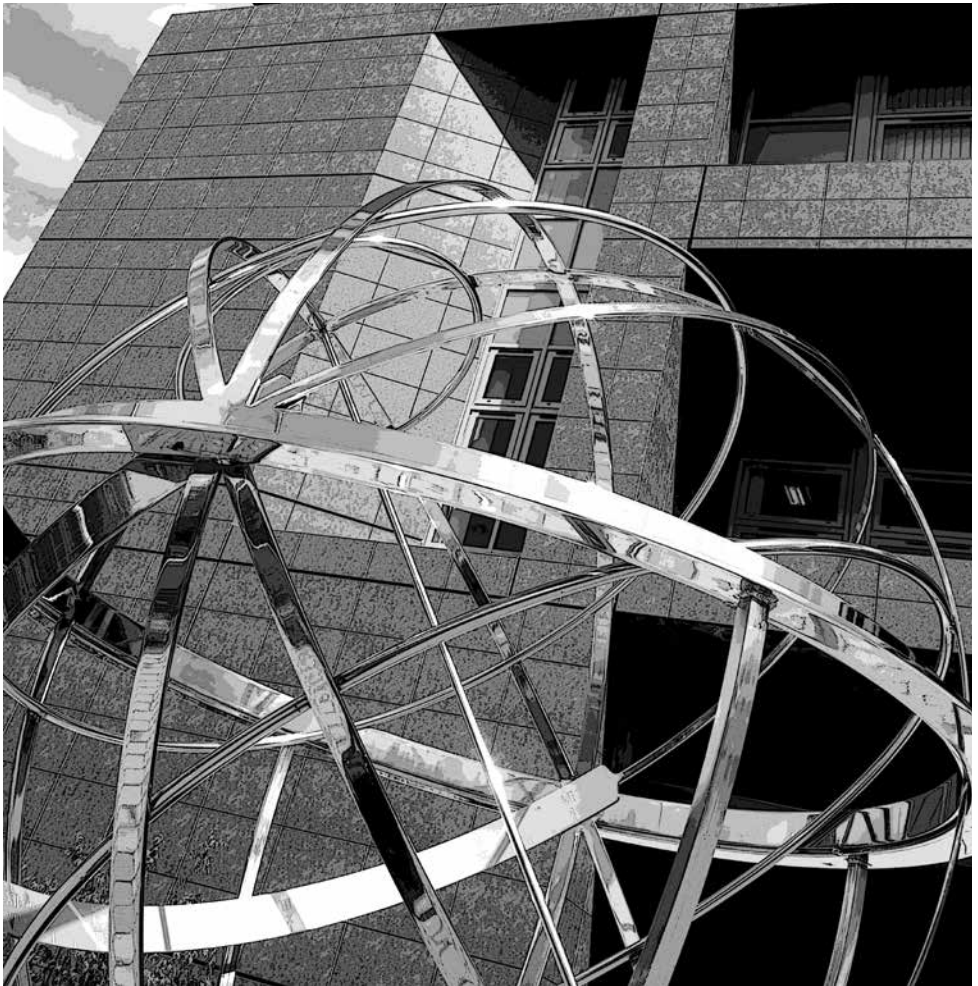


Oxford University Hospitals **NHS**
NHS Trust

Oxford Centre for Head and Neck Oncology

Trans-Oral Laser Surgery

Information for patients



Introduction

This booklet has been written by members of the Head and Neck Oncology team as a guide if you are having trans-oral laser surgery. It answers those questions most frequently asked by patients.

This information is only a guide; your healthcare team will be able to give you more detailed information as and when you need it.

We hope you and your family will find the information both reassuring and supportive.

What is a laser?

A laser is a high power beam of light. It can be used in different ways as a surgical tool. The surgeons use a laser attached to a microscope to remove tissue, instead of using a scalpel (surgical knife).

What does trans-oral mean?

Trans-oral means 'through the mouth'. Using this route of entry means that we don't have to make any cuts or scars on the outside of your body.

How long will the procedure take?

How long the procedure will take will depend on the size of your tumour and where it is located.

What are the side effects of trans-oral laser surgery?

- **Pain:** Immediately after the operation you may not feel much pain because the laser seals off nerves, causing numbness. The nerves start to work again over the next 24-48 hours and then the feeling returns to the tissues. You may start to feel some pain at this time.

You will be given pain control medication by mouth or through a drip in your arm to help keep you pain free. Your pain may be moderate to severe but will be monitored closely so that we can keep on top of it with painkillers.

- **Bleeding:** Sometimes the area can bleed after the surgery but you will be closely watched for this while you are in hospital. The team will advise you on what to do if you start bleeding after you are discharged home.
- **Speech and swallowing difficulties:** These are likely to occur if the laser treatment involves any part of your mouth or throat. If you experience any difficulties with your speech or swallowing, you will be referred to a Speech and Language Therapist.

Will I be able to eat and drink after the operation?

This depends on where you have had your treatment and the area that has been treated. It may be difficult to eat and drink for a while after the operation while the tissues are healing. You may need to be fed through a tube during this time. The Dietitian will talk to you about the type of tube and feed you may need.

Once the swelling and discomfort has reduced, the Speech and Language Therapist will assess your swallowing and talk to you about the consistency of food and drink that will be safest and easiest for you to manage.

The Speech and Language Therapist may also give you exercises to help your speech and swallowing, which should gradually improve.

How will I know that I am getting the right amount of nourishment?

Getting enough food and drink is important for wound healing and energy levels. To make sure that you are getting enough nourishment, the Dietitian will assess your daily eating pattern and will calculate what your body needs. You will be advised about the most suitable foods to eat and how to achieve a balanced intake. The Dietitian will also talk to you about adding extra nourishment to your food and the use of nutritional supplements, if required.

Will I need a feeding tube?

If the laser surgery is likely to affect your swallowing it may be necessary for you to have a feeding tube before and/or after the operation. This will be one of the following:

- A nasogastric tube – this is a feeding tube that is passed through your nose into your stomach.
- A gastrostomy tube – this is a feeding tube that is passed through the wall of your abdomen (tummy) directly into your stomach.

A liquid feed designed to meet your nutritional needs will be given to you through the feeding tube.

A feeding tube will not interfere with your ability to eat and drink actual food. The tube will be removed when you are ready to eat and drink enough to maintain or gain weight. You may need to go home with the feeding tube if you are unable to eat and drink enough before you leave hospital. This will be discussed with you during your stay.

Will it affect my speech?

Your speech may be affected by swelling and discomfort, depending on which parts of your mouth and throat have been treated by laser. This will resolve with time.

You may be given exercises to improve your speech and your voice.

If you have laser treatment to your voice box area, we will recommend that you have a short period of voice rest in order to allow the area to heal.

How to contact us/further information

If you have any questions or concerns, or need any further information, please contact your GP or telephone:

Head and Neck Cancer Specialist Nurses

Tel: 01865 234 346 (Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 4.00pm)

Speech and Language Therapists

Tel: 01865 231 205 (Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm)

You will also be given the Specialist Nurses leaflet, which contains information on websites and local support groups that you may find helpful.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust
Oxford OX3 9DU
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

