

GUIDE TO

NECK
MASSES

DIAGNOSIS, CAUSES, AND TREATMENTS

MEDICAL INFORMATION DISCLAIMER:

This book is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention. The authors and publisher specifically disclaim any responsibility for any liability, loss, or risk, personal or otherwise, which is incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use and application of any of the contents of this book.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Diagnosing a Neck Mass	5
Medical History, Physical Exam, Laryngoscopy	6
Imaging and Other Tests	7
Causes	8
Mononucleosis	9
Tonsillitis	9
Strep Throat	10
Mumps	11
Lipoma	12
Goiter	13
Thyroid Nodules	14
Hodgkin's Disease	15
Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma	16
Thyroid Cancer	17
Other Cancers	18
Treatments for Neck Masses	19
Medications, Neck Mass Excision, Tumor Excision	20
In Conclusion	21

INTRODUCTION

Do you have a strange lump in your neck that won't go away? A neck mass is an abnormal lump in your neck that can have a number of different medical causes and can be large and easy to see or very small and almost imperceptible. Children or adults can develop a mass in the neck. Because the neck is such a complex part of your anatomy, a neck mass larger than your fingertip that has been present for more than several weeks should be checked out by a qualified ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist for proper diagnosis. Many times a neck mass is benign, but it's always a good idea to have it evaluated.



DIAGNOSING A NECK MASS

A mass in the neck is a symptom of an illness, not an illness in itself, so it's important to determine the cause of a neck mass in order to develop a proper treatment plan. Your doctor will want to determine if a lump or mass in your neck is a symptom of an acute illness or caused by a serious or chronic condition.

MEDICAL HISTORY

If you visit us at C/V ENT Surgical Group for a mass in the neck, a qualified ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist will first obtain a complete medical history. Reviewing your medical history is a very important step for a neck mass evaluation, as it can provide crucial information about causes and risk factors. We'll ask you questions about your current and past lifestyle habits like tobacco and alcohol use, which are closely linked with cancers of the mouth, throat, voice box, and tongue and can lead to a mass in the neck. We also may ask about past injuries, surgeries, or illnesses. We'll discuss how long you have had the neck mass, if it has changed, and we'll ask detailed questions about any other symptoms you may be experiencing.

PHYSICAL EXAM

A thorough physical examination of your head and neck is a key part of evaluating a neck mass. Your ENT will examine the neck through touch and gentle pressure (palpating) to feel for nodules, lumps, and evaluate pain and discomfort. Your ENT will also examine your ears, nose, and mouth thoroughly for possible causes of your neck mass.

LARYNGOSCOPY

To look at the throat and pharynx, your doctor may perform a laryngoscopy, which is an examination with a special scope. The laryngoscopy can be performed in our office with minimal time and discomfort. Flexible laryngoscopy uses a tiny cable with a scope, which is inserted down the nose. To prepare for flexible laryngoscopy, we'll spray numbing medicine into the nose. The scope will allow your doctor to visualize the structures in the back of your nose, in your throat and examine your voice box.

IMAGING AND OTHER TESTS

Additional tests may be necessary to help your doctor make a proper diagnosis. Tests that might be ordered include:

NECK ULTRASOUND:

Ultrasound uses high-frequency sound waves to create images. These images help your doctor look at structures within your neck and identify the origin and characteristics of a neck mass. If an ultrasound is ordered, it would be done at an imaging center and sent back to our office for our physicians to interpret.

CT SCANS, MRI, AND PET SCANS:

These imaging studies may be helpful tools for your doctor to diagnose a neck mass. If your doctor orders one of these tests, they would be completed at an imaging center.

LAB TESTS:

Lab tests can be a helpful tool for an ENT in diagnosing certain causes of a mass in the neck. This may include urine tests or blood work.

BIOPSY:

A biopsy is a procedure in which some tissue is taken for testing, oftentimes to detect or rule out cancer. A biopsy for a neck mass is often done using fine-needle aspiration, which can be performed comfortably in-office. The area of the neck to be biopsied will be given local anesthesia to prevent pain during the procedure. Using precise ultrasound guidance, a very thin needle may be inserted into the neck to retrieve small samples that can be evaluated microscopically.

CAUSES

Properly diagnosing a neck mass is important because it can be caused by such a variety of illnesses, from minor to serious. The neck is a complex part of the anatomy and a mass in the neck may be caused by problems originating in the glands, nerves, arteries, veins, muscles, cervical spine, voicebox, or the windpipe. Here are some of the different conditions that may cause a neck mass.

MONONUCLEOSIS

WHAT IT IS:

Mononucleosis, or “mono” is a contagious disease most common in teenagers and young adults. It is an infection that usually develops from the Epstein-barr virus, but can be caused by other viruses.

SYMPTOMS:

In addition to enlarged lymph nodes in the neck and armpits, symptoms can include extreme fatigue, sore throat, fever, body aches, headache, rash, and rarely enlarged liver and spleen. Symptoms can last for weeks or even months, with some people experiencing symptoms for more than six months.

CAUSES:

Mononucleosis is an infection that usually develops from the Epstein-barr virus, but can be caused by other viruses. It's transmitted through bodily fluids, especially saliva. There is no vaccine to protect against mononucleosis.

TREATMENTS:

Treatment for mononucleosis is primarily centered on managing symptoms and comfort including drinking fluids, getting rest, and over-the-counter pain medicine. Patients are usually advised against participating in contact sports until after a full recovery, as strenuous activity can lead to rupture of the spleen.

TONSILLITIS

WHAT IT IS:

Tonsils are lymph nodes located on either side of the neck at the back of the throat. They are one of the body's key defense mechanisms in fighting infection. Tonsillitis is when the tonsils become infected.

SYMPTOMS:

The most prominent symptom of tonsillitis is a very sore throat, along with swollen, red or spotted tonsils. People may also experience difficult or painful swallowing, bad breath, fever, chills, headache, and tenderness in the neck or jaw. Symptoms typically last a week to 10 days. Symptoms that require urgent attention are neck stiffness, swelling in the throat that causes difficulty breathing, muscle weakness, or fever higher than 103°F.

CAUSES:

Tonsillitis is extremely contagious and can be contracted by exposure to respiratory droplets from an infected person. Many different types of common viruses and bacteria, including the bacteria that causes strep throat can lead to tonsillitis. It is very common in children, but can occur at any age.

TREATMENTS:

Tonsillitis may go away on its own or improve with home remedies, but some cases may require antibiotics. If symptoms last longer than 10 days or recur at least five times in a year, you may have chronic or recurrent tonsillitis, in which case it may be a good idea to seek the care of an ENT specialist. Chronic tonsillitis can lead to tonsil stones, requiring removal by a doctor. Other times, a tonsillectomy, or surgical removal of the tonsils may be recommended for chronic tonsillitis.

STREP THROAT

WHAT IT IS:

Strep throat is a mild, but painful infection, in the throat and tonsils caused by group A Streptococcus (group A strep) bacteria.

SYMPTOMS:

The dominant symptom of strep throat is a very sore throat, often one that comes on quickly. It may be painful to swallow and you may have a fever or headache. (Cough, runny nose and hoarseness are NOT symptoms of strep throat and usually indicate a different cause for sore throat symptoms.) Also very common in strep throat are swollen tonsils that may be red or spotty, as well as swollen lymph nodes in the neck.

CAUSES:

Group A Streptococcus bacteria live in the throat and nose and are very contagious. Some people who are infected with group A strep don't appear sick or have symptoms, but bacteria can still be spread through respiratory droplets, such as through coughing and sneezing. Strep throat is more common in children than in adults.

TREATMENTS:

In order to diagnose strep throat, a throat culture or rapid swab test is done. Antibiotics are often prescribed because untreated strep throat can lead to serious complications such as rheumatic fever. Sometimes chronic strep throat infections may lead your doctor to recommend a tonsillectomy.

MUMPS

WHAT IT IS:

Mumps is a virus that causes tender, swollen salivary glands. Mumps can be prevented with the MMR vaccine, which is usually administered in early childhood.

SYMPTOMS:

The enlarged salivary glands caused by the virus can lead to swelling and tenderness in the neck under the ears, as well puffy cheeks, fever, headache, body aches, fatigue, and loss of appetite. But many people may have mild symptoms and be unaware they have the disease. Complications are more common in adults than children and include the risk of meningitis or inflammation of various organs, including the testicles, ovaries, pancreas, and brain.

CAUSES:

Mumps is caused by a virus and spreads from respiratory droplets, but is less contagious than other childhood diseases such as measles and chickenpox.

TREATMENTS:

Most people who contract mumps recover within several weeks using comfort remedies such as rest, fluids, and fever and pain management.

LIPOMA

WHAT IT IS:

A non-cancerous (benign) tumor from an overgrowth of fatty cells is called a lipoma. They can be developed at any age, but are much more common in adults. They can form anywhere on the body but commonly can appear on the neck.

SYMPTOMS:

A lipoma in the neck may look like a mass or lump. It may be soft and move under the skin when pressed. They often grow slowly and are usually painless, unless they cause nerve compression.

CAUSES:

The cause of lipomas are not known, but there are some things that may increase risk, including family history and some health conditions, including adiposis dolorosa, Cowden syndrome, Madelung's disease, and Bannayan-Riley-Ruvalcaba syndrome. Lipomas are most common in people between the ages of 40 and 60.

TREATMENTS:

Lipomas may be harmless but some people choose to have a lipoma surgically removed because it causes pain, discomfort, or for cosmetic reasons. A surgical excision of a lipoma is usually done under local anesthesia. Sometimes, a lipoma can be reduced in size by liposuction, since lipomas are made up of fatty tissue. Steroid injections are another possibility that can reduce the size of a lipoma.

GOITER

WHAT IT IS:

The thyroid is a gland in the neck that regulates a number of functions in the body, including metabolism, heart rate, mood, digestion, and respiration, by secreting important hormones. A goiter is an enlarged thyroid and can sometimes affect thyroid function.

SYMPTOMS:

A goiter can cause swelling or a large mass at the base of your neck, due to the enlargement of the thyroid gland. Other symptoms of goiter may be a sensation of tightness in the throat, coughing, difficulty breathing or swallowing, or voice changes.

CAUSES:

Goiters are most commonly caused by iodine deficiency, because the thyroid needs iodine to produce hormones. Without the necessary iodine, the thyroid can become enlarged as it works to make enough thyroid hormone.

Graves disease (or hyperthyroidism) can also lead to a goiter because the thyroid produces more thyroid hormone than normal. Hashimoto's disease (Hashimoto's thyroiditis) is when the thyroid doesn't produce enough thyroid hormone, leading to hypothyroidism. In those with Hashimoto's disease, the pituitary gland may react to the low thyroid hormone making more thyroid-stimulating hormone, leading to thyroid enlargement.

Other causes of a goiter include non Hashimoto's thyroiditis (thyroid inflammation), pregnancy, menopause, and reactions to medications or radiation therapy.

TREATMENTS:

A doctor may use a number of methods to diagnose a goiter, including a physical exam, blood tests, a thyroid scan, ultrasound, or biopsy. Treatment for a goiter will depend on your symptoms and the size of the goiter, as well as any health conditions related to the goiter. If a goiter is small and caused by insufficient iodine, increasing iodine consumption may help decrease the goiter size. Goiters due to hypo- or hyperthyroidism or thyroiditis may be able to be treated through medication.

Radioactive iodine can be used, taken orally, to destroy overactive thyroid tissue. Some goiters may need to be removed by surgery (thyroidectomy) if other treatments aren't effective. That's when our surgeons will get involved with patients is when they require surgical removal.

THYROID NODULES

WHAT IT IS:

Sometimes a neck mass may mean benign (noncancerous) thyroid nodules, lumps that can form within the thyroid gland. Nodules can lead to discomfort, trouble breathing or swallowing, or hyperthyroidism, the overproduction of thyroid hormone. Most thyroid nodules (over 85 percent) are noncancerous.

SYMPTOMS:

The majority of thyroid nodules are not serious. Many don't cause symptoms and some people aren't aware they have a thyroid nodule. However, if a thyroid nodule becomes large enough you may experience symptoms such as:

- Pain at the base of the neck
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Hoarse voice
- Goiter

If a thyroid nodule leads to hyperthyroidism, you may also develop symptoms such as:

- Irregular heartbeat
- Weight loss
- Muscle weakness
- Sleeping problems

If a thyroid nodule is related to Hashimoto's disease you may experience:

- Weight gain
- Fatigue
- Cold sensitivity
- Dry hair, nails, and skin
- Constipation

CAUSES:

Thyroid nodules are usually caused by an overgrowth of normal thyroid tissue. It's sometimes unclear what causes this tissue overgrowth, but doctor's have observed an increase risk for thyroid nodules in those who:

- Have a family history of thyroid nodules
- Had thyroid x-rays in childhood
- Have a pre-existing thyroid condition
- Are more than 60 years old

TREATMENTS:

Treatment for thyroid nodules depends on the size and type of nodule. If a nodule is noncancerous and isn't causing breathing, swallowing, or other problems, your doctor may want to monitor it with exams and ultrasounds before pursuing any treatment. It is rare for a nodule to go from non cancerous to cancerous.

If a nodule is leading to overproduction of thyroid hormones, medication, radioactive iodine, or surgery may be used to remove the nodule. If your nodule is filled with fluid, it can be drained using fine-needle aspiration.

HODGKIN'S DISEASE

WHAT IT IS:

Hodgkin's disease (or Hodgkin lymphoma) is a type of blood cancer that originates in the lymphocytes (white blood cells), usually in the neck, chest or armpits.

SYMPTOMS:

The most typical symptom of Hodgkin's disease is enlarged lymph nodes, causing a lump or mass in the neck. Usually it isn't painful. A lump (or lumps) may appear on the side of the neck, in the armpit, or near the groin. Other symptoms of Hodgkin's disease include fatigue, unexplained weight loss, irritated skin, fever, night sweats, chest pain, trouble breathing, coughing, or lymph node pain after drinking alcohol.

CAUSES:

Hodgkin's disease may be linked to DNA mutations, as well as the Epstein-Barr virus, but the main cause of the disease is not known. It is most common between the ages of 15 and 40 and after the age of 55.

TREATMENTS:

Fortunately, Hodgkin lymphoma is often found early and is more treatable than many other forms of cancer. After initial Hodgkin's disease diagnosis, the cancer must be assigned a stage to determine its severity, and treatment will depend on the stage. Chemotherapy and radiation are the main forms of treatment. Some patients may have immunotherapy or a stem cell transplant if they don't respond to other treatments. After any treatment for Hodgkin's disease, you'll need to have lifelong regular follow-ups with your doctor.

NON-HODGKIN'S LYMPHOMA

WHAT IT IS:

Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma is more common than Hodgkin's disease. It's also a blood cancer that occurs in the lymphatic system. The main difference between the two types of cancers is that in Hodgkin's disease a type of abnormal cell called the Reed-Sternberg cell is present, while in Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma it is not. There are different kinds of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, most of which are categorized as B-cell lymphoma (85 percent).

SYMPTOMS:

Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma may include symptoms such as chest pain, difficulty breathing, coughing, fatigue, fever, weight loss and night sweats. Swollen lymph nodes in the neck and abdominal pain and swelling are also symptoms.

CAUSES:

The cause of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma isn't known—it occurs when the body produces too many abnormal lymphocytes (white blood cells in the immune system). These abnormal cells continue to grow and divide, causing enlarged lymph nodes.

Although cause isn't known, increase of risk may be linked to:

- Being over the age of 60
- Use of immunosuppressants
- Epstein-Barr virus
- HIV
- Exposure to some chemicals

TREATMENTS:

Once Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma has been diagnosed, a stage of cancer must be assessed. If your doctor determines that the cancer is growing slowly and you aren't experiencing symptoms, your doctor may not recommend immediate treatment. But if treatment is undertaken, medication, chemotherapy, or radiation can be used.

THYROID CANCER

WHAT IT IS:

The thyroid is a small gland located in the base of the throat. It produces hormones which help the body regulate a number of functions. Cancer of the thyroid is the most common kind of endocrine cancer. There are different types of thyroid cancer, including:

- Anaplastic thyroid cancer: This is the rarest, most aggressive and most difficult to treat type of thyroid cancer.
- Follicular thyroid cancer: This kind of thyroid cancer is more likely to reoccur or to spread.
- Medullary thyroid cancer: this type of thyroid cancer may be treated differently than other types of thyroid cancer because it is when the cancer occurs in non-thyroid cells in the thyroid gland.
- Papillary thyroid cancer: the most common type of cancer, less dangerous than other forms and more treatable.
- Thyroid lymphoma: a rare type of thyroid cancer, originating in immune cells in the thyroid gland.

SYMPTOMS:

In its early stages, thyroid cancer often has no symptoms. As cancer accelerates, symptoms may include:

- Coughing and hoarseness
- Pain in the throat and/or neck
- Difficulty swallowing
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Neck mass or throat lump

CAUSES:

It usually isn't possible to determine the cause of thyroid cancer, but risk factors include:

- Family history of thyroid cancer (especially medullary thyroid cancer)
- Being a woman
- History of breast cancer
- History of radiation exposure
- Being over the age of 40

TREATMENTS:

Treatment for thyroid cancer depends on what kind of cancer it is and if it has spread, or metastasized, to other parts of the body. Some treatments for thyroid cancer can include radioactive iodine, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy, but most people who have thyroid cancer will need surgery to remove all or part of the thyroid gland. Because surgical removal of the thyroid gland stops the body's ability to produce thyroid hormone, this will require lifelong supplements.

OTHER CANCERS

Some other cancers that may also cause a mass in the neck, include lung cancer, throat cancer, breast cancer, leukemia, basal cell carcinoma, melanoma, and other skin cancers other cancers in tissues of the head and neck. Depending on the type of cancer, there may be other symptoms, including skin changes on the neck, difficulty swallowing, weight loss, and voice changes. Your doctor will do thorough exams and testing to make a diagnosis and assign a state to the cancer before providing treatment.

TREATMENTS FOR A NECK MASS

The head and neck have some of the most complex anatomy in the human body, which is why it's important to choose the right specialist. The physicians at C/V ENT Surgical Group have extensive head and neck surgical training and when treating complex issues in this area they are always mindful of form and function in their patients. As such they represent a select few head and neck surgeons in the country that utilize minimally invasive techniques in the treatment of various head and neck disorders and tumors.

MEDICATIONS

Sometimes medications, such as antibiotics, may be an effective treatment for a neck mass or lump if your doctor is certain it is caused only by infection, while some conditions may require head and neck surgery, thyroid surgery, or other treatments.

NECK MASS EXCISION

If surgery is needed to remove a neck mass, it's important to turn to experts with extensive experience because the neck holds many critical nerve and vascular structures. The renowned surgeons at C/V ENT Surgical Group have the proper training to adequately minimize trauma to these structures while successfully removing the mass.

TUMOR EXCISION

If a tumor is the cause of a neck mass, the specialists at C/V ENT Surgical Group are experts in creating an appropriate surgical plan for removal to minimize risk to the critical structures of the neck. They also always strive to make the smallest incision possible that can provide safe removal while reducing risk of cosmetic problems from surgery.

Benign tumor excision for a neck mass might include removal of superficial skin lesions such as cysts or skin tags to deeper more infiltrating masses like lipomas and branchial cleft cysts. The renowned surgeons at C/V ENT Surgical Group also have extensive experience with malignancies and guiding patients through their choices and treatment process. If a tumor is malignant and requires removal, surgeons ensure a proper work-up to ensure the best chance of successful outcome, always with considerations for functional and cosmetic outcomes.

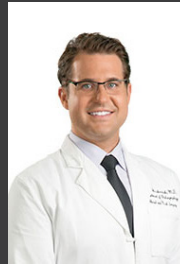
IN CONCLUSION

Masses or lumps in the neck are serious, so it's important not to ignore it. Fortunately for many illnesses that may result in a mass in the neck, the earlier the condition is diagnosed, the more effective treatments may be. If you discover a mass in your neck, contact us today for a consultation. The board-certified ENT physicians at C/V ENT Surgical Group offer subspecialty expertise and cutting-edge surgical techniques to help patients address a variety of conditions.

ABOUT OUR PRACTICE

Dr. Alen Cohen, Dr. Bob Armin, Dr. Matt Hershcovitch, Dr. Michael Reder, and Dr. Vera Cecilio aim to provide unparalleled medical and surgical care at C/V ENT Surgical Group. These Los Angeles board-certified ENT physicians specialize in various aspects of ear, nose and throat disorders so that each physician has a sub-specialty within the ENT field. Thus you as the patient are provided the highest level of care and expertise for your particular problem. At C/V ENT Surgical Group we always use the most cutting edge techniques and the best medical equipment to diagnose and treat each and every one of our patients. Aesthetic and functional concerns as well as compassion are of utmost importance to our physicians and by the end of your experience you'll see why we're consistently rated the best ENT doctors in Los Angeles.

Call C/V ENT Surgical Group to schedule a consultation with one of our renowned ENT doctors or facial plastic surgeons.



CONTACT C/V ENT SURGICAL GROUP

16500 Ventura Blvd, Suite 420
Encino, CA 91436
818-986-1200

7345 Medical Center Dr, Suite 510
West Hills, CA 91307
818-888-7878

info@cvsurgicalgroup.com | cvsurgicalgroup.com

