



# Laryngeal (Voice box) Cancer

**Are you at risk?**

**What are the signs  
and symptoms?**

## About Laryngeal Cancer

The larynx is part of your airway and contains the vocal cords which are two bands of tissue that form a V shape and vibrate together when air passes between them. This produces the sound of your voice. Cancer can develop on these cords just below or just above them.

Laryngeal cancer accounts for roughly 2% of all cancers diagnosed in New Zealand. Approximately 200 people will be diagnosed each year and if treated early 95% will survive.

This type of cancer is rare in people under 40. It's more common in people in their 60s and 70s. It's five times more common in men than in women.

# Here's what you should watch for...

## Possible Signs and Symptoms

**See your GP if any of the following symptoms last more than 3 weeks**

- A hoarse voice
- Difficulty swallowing
- A feeling that there is a lump in your throat
- A cough or shortness of breath
- A lump in your neck

There are large groups of lymph nodes in your neck. Throat cancers can spread to these lymph nodes or glands and a lump in your neck that doesn't go away may be the first sign of a cancer.

**Remember that all these symptoms can be caused by less worrying conditions but it's important to have them checked by your GP.**

## Early detection

Cancer starts when cells in the body begin to grow out of control. Cells in nearly any part of the body can become cancer, and can spread to other areas of the body.

It is important to diagnose Laryngeal cancer as early as possible when it can be treated more successfully.

The treatment success rate can be as high as 95% if treated early.

There is currently no screening test for laryngeal cancer but if your GP is concerned, you will be referred to a specialist for more tests.

## What puts someone at risk?

### **Tobacco and alcohol use:**

Tobacco use of any kind, including cigarette smoking, puts you at risk. Alcohol use also increases your chances of developing laryngeal cancer. Using tobacco and alcohol together poses a much greater risk than using either substance alone.

### **Diet:**

A diet high in animal fats and low in fruit and vegetables may increase your risk of developing laryngeal cancer.

### **Acid reflux:**

Stomach acid coming back up the oesophagus can irritate and damage the larynx and may possibly increase your risk of developing laryngeal cancer.