

Soundbite Script – Knowing the Signs of Head and Neck Cancer

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad, Radiation Oncologist, OSF HealthCare

“Head and neck cancer is not a very common cancer but it still comprises about five percent of all cancers in the United States. It is primarily due to tobacco use, smoking and other forms of tobacco and alcohol. It is much easier to treat – you have a better prognosis – if it’s caught early so you want to be vigilant and aware of changes in this region – if it’s your voice, a sore, a lump in your neck or things like that.”

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad, Radiation Oncologist, OSF HealthCare

“The symptoms can vary depending on the actual location, so even though this head and neck region is not a very big area it manifests very differently meaning larynx cancer will many times manifest as voice changes whereas throat cancer will show up as pain, coughing, difficulty swallowing, sometimes ear pain can be a symptom of certain head and neck cancers. So it really depends on what area.”

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad, Radiation Oncologist, OSF HealthCare

“Because 20 to 25 percent of cancers that aren’t caused by tobacco or alcohol use or viral related, sometimes it’s from poor oral hygiene. You want to go to your dentist regularly, brush and floss regularly, take care of your gums and also to that end if you notice issues to your mouth or your teeth, bleeding gums or a sore on your tongue or something like that, show it to your dentist.”

Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad, Radiation Oncologist, OSF HealthCare

“The main take home point is you know your body the best. If you’re having an issue that is abnormal to you or that’s not getting better you at least need to have your physician be aware of it to take the necessary steps.”