

Q How will I be able to eat and drink immediately after the operation?

A To allow your throat and stomach to heal you cannot eat or drink anything for a week or so after the operation. During this time, you will be fed through a tube. Then you will have an x-ray to check that everything has healed. If this x-ray is all right, you will start to eat soft foods. See the PLO recovery leaflet for more details.

Converting the stomach from a reservoir (sac) to a tube can produce some difficulties. Your stomach will not be able to hold the same amount of food as before. Taking small meals more often than normal helps to overcome this problem.


Q How will I be able to talk after the operation?

A During the first days after the operation, you will need to write messages or point and gesture. As things heal you will be able to mouth messages; it will help to try to remember to go slowly and you may need to clarify what you have said by writing it down. As you heal there are 4 main options for verbal communication

Surgical voice restoration Electrolarynx or communication aid

Mouthing, developing a whisper Oesophageal speech

Again, more information is in the PLO recovery leaflet



THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF LARYNGECTOMEES CLUBS

PLO

Pharyngo-Laryngo-Oesophagectomy

The Operation

This leaflet describes the operation and the changes that will happen to your body.

The Operation

Q What is a Pharyngo-laryngo-oesophagectomy?

Cancers in the lower part of the pharynx (upper gullet) usually arise in the area between the pharynx and larynx (voice box). Many of these cancers spread quite some distance under the surface of the pharynx and into the oesophagus (gullet).

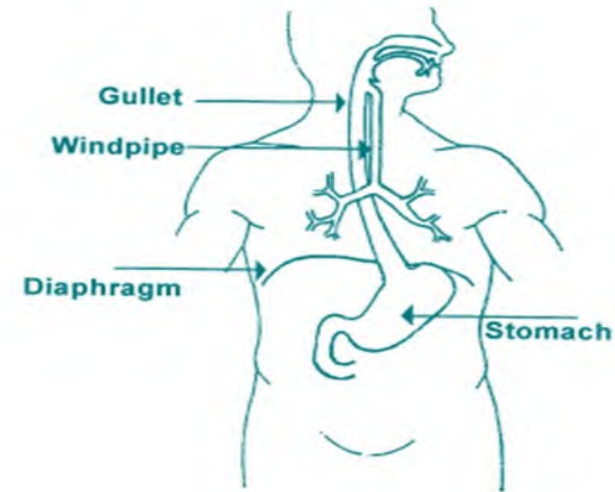
If surgery is going to cure the cancer then it has to include removal of the pharynx, the larynx and a portion of the oesophagus. It is easier to remove the whole of the oesophagus rather than try and join the lower end to another organ midway through the chest, hence the operation for these cancers is removal of all three organs — hence the name pharyngo-laryngo-oesophagectomy (PLO).

Q What happens during the operation?

A The initial surgical procedure is much the same as a laryngectomy (removal of voice box). The larynx is separated from the windpipe. The end of the windpipe is brought forwards and stitched to form a hole in the skin of the neck. This is then the permanent opening through which you breathe after surgery, this is called a stoma.

Once the stomach has been released it can then be pulled up through the chest without having to open the chest cavity itself. The join can then be made between the top of the stomach and the remaining part of the pharynx. The neck and abdominal wounds are then stitched. There are usually drainage tubes coming from both wounds for a few days post-operatively.

ANATOMY BEFORE THE OPERATION



AFTER THE OPERATION

