MSK's team of speech pathologists, including Margaret Ho, have extensive experience in swallow and voice therapy.

Certain cancer treatments, such as surgery , chemotherapy , and radiation therapy , may affect your ability to swallow, speak, or hear. These side effects are common among those treated for head and neck cancers , but people with all types of cancer may experience them.

Making an Appointment

To make an appointment, call us at 212-639-5856 , Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. You need to be an MSK patient to work with our specialists.

Memorial Sloan Kettering's Speech and Hearing Center provides a variety of services to help you overcome speech, language, voice, swallowing, and hearing problems following cancer treatment.

Our team has extensive training and experience in swallow therapy, speech, language and voice therapy, and hearing therapy for people of all ages. As a cancer center, we have particular expertise in cancer-related speech and hearing problems. We also have access to the latest technological advances, allowing us to offer highly precise evaluations and innovative therapeutic options.

Our speech and hearing specialists offer appointments on an outpatient basis. They also are available to work with patients during their hospital stay.

Help for Speech and Swallowing Problems

Our highly experienced team has expertise in the following therapies.

Swallowing
Therapy

Speech
Therapy

Voice
Therapy

Speech Restoration after
Laryngectomy

MSK Kids

MSK's speech pathology team also provides services for children at MSK Kids . Our team assesses, diagnoses, and manages communication, swallowing, and feeding disorders for pediatric patients with a diagnosis of cancer or a hematological condition. We provide these services in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

Some children may have pre-existing and/or associated speech, language, or feeding/swallowing difficulties. For others, these difficulties may develop as a consequence of their cancer or their treatment. Some children may have difficulty chewing or swallowing their meals. They may also have difficulty with certain food textures and even refuse certain foods. Sometimes they can have difficulty speaking and understanding language. The speech pathology team works with children and their families to rehabilitate and support speech, language, and feeding development.

The speech pathology team offers clinical swallow and feeding evaluations, modified barium swallow studies, and speech/language evaluations at MSK Kids.

The speech pathologists will work to provide children and their families with a coordinated, multidisciplinary service related to their care at MSK Kids. Speech pathologists work closely with the primary oncology teams, pediatric gastroenterologists, pediatric dieticians, and the pediatric psychosocial team.

Help for Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is a common side effect of cancer treatment. It usually occurs when chemotherapy or radiation therapy causes injury to the inner ear. This condition is called ototoxicity.

Our audiology team, specialists in hearing loss, provides diagnostic and therapeutic approaches for the detection and management of hearing loss resulting from ototoxicity.

We use a variety of tests to assess your hearing status. These include:

Audiologist Kerri O'Connor works with patients to address treatment-related hearing loss.

- Otoscopy
  Otoscopy is used to examine all the parts of your ear, including the external auditory canal (outer ear), tympanic membrane (eardrum), and middle ear. It uses an otoscope, which contains a light and a magnifying lens to illuminate and enlarge the ear structures for examination. This procedure evaluates the health of the ear's visible anatomical structures and identifies if there is any blockage in the external ear canal.
- Tympanometry
  This procedure tests how well your eardrum moves and is used to detect problems in the middle ear. An audiologist will place a probe tip in the ear canal. The instrument generates a pure tone, changes the pressure in the ear canal, and the measures the response. Tympanometry can be helpful in determining if there are problems in the eustachian tube — the canal that connects the middle ear to the throat — and the presence of fluid behind the eardrum.
- Acoustic Reflex
  An acoustic reflex is an involuntary muscle contraction that occurs in the middle ear in response to a loud noise. To test this, our audiologist places a probe tip in the ear canal that emits a brief, loud noise. Muscle contractions are then measured and recorded. This exam evaluates the middle ear, the inner ear (cochlea) and the nerves connected to the stapedius muscle, which contracts in response to loud noises to reduce the amount of sound that gets into the inner ear.
- Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE)
  This procedure evaluates how well the cochlea is functioning. A probe tip emits sound into the inner ear. Hair cells in the inner ear – which send acoustic information to the brain — respond to the sound by creating a vibration. The vibration produces a very quiet sound that echoes back into the middle ear. This sound is measured and recorded as an otoacoustic emission.
- Pure Tone Audiometry
  This procedure provides a baseline measure of hearing levels. Testing is performed within a soundproof booth. Earphones or headphones are placed in the ear canals or over the ears. Patients are instructed to press a button and then raise their hand or say "yes" when they hear a beep in either ear. This test is used to diagnose the different degrees of hearing loss if any is present.
- Bone Conduction Testing
  Bone conduction testing helps diagnose the type of hearing loss. We place a small device behind the ear on the mastoid bone. Different frequencies of sound are sent though the device, causing a gentle vibration of the skull. The vibration goes directly to the inner ear, bypassing the outer and middle ear.
- Speech Audiometry
  This test determines how softly you can hear words and how clearly you are able to understand them. This involves an audiologist saying words and asking the patient to repeat them. At the conclusion of these tests, each patient is counselled on their findings.

If a hearing loss is diagnosed, we will discuss the degree and type of hearing loss with you. Each patient's diagnosis may vary. The audiologist will work to create an individualized plan to help you improve your hearing and communication.

Speech Pathology and Audiology
Research