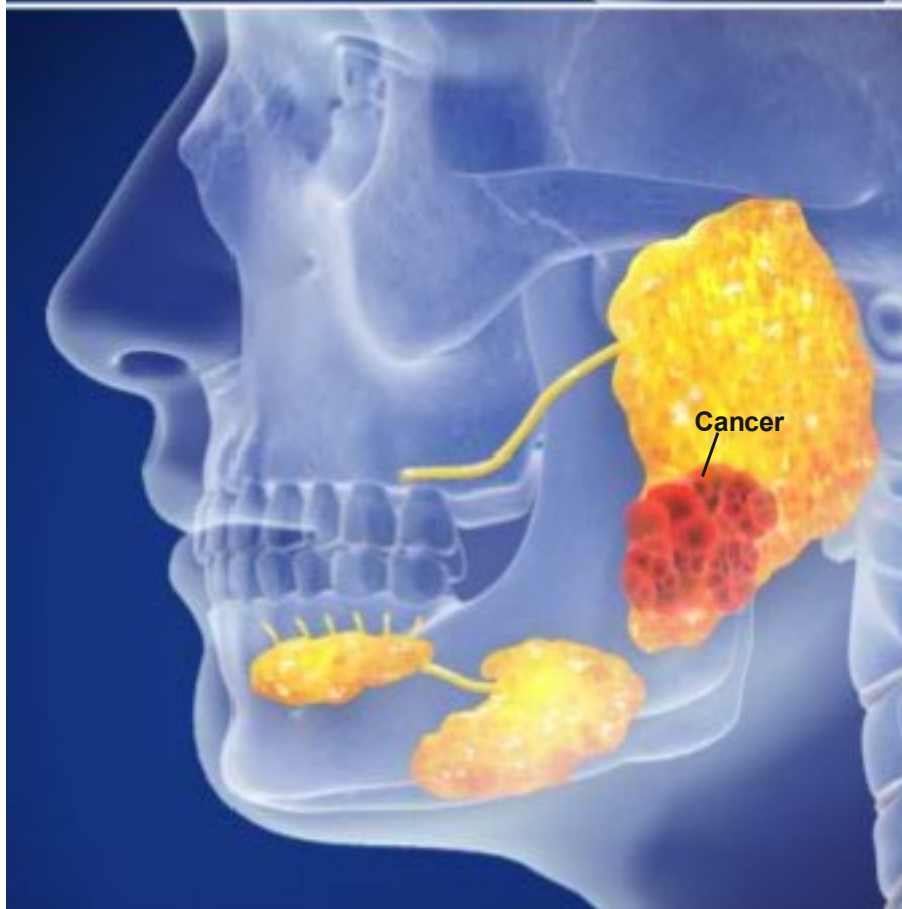
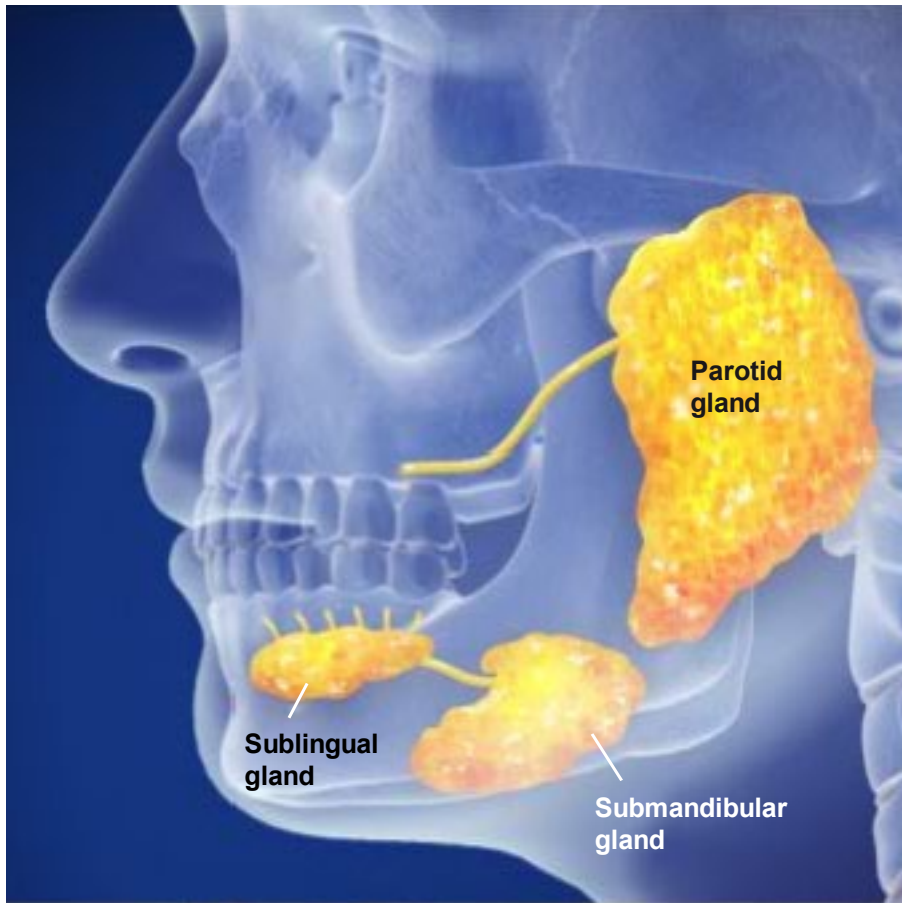


Salivary Gland Cancer



Overview

This rare form of cancer begins in the tissue of the salivary glands. The salivary glands produce saliva, which aids in chewing, swallowing and digestion. Salivary gland cancer can form in any of the salivary glands.

Anatomy

There are three major pairs of salivary glands. The parotid glands, located in the cheeks in front of the ears, are the largest. The submandibular glands are located at the back of the mouth on both sides of the jaw. The sublingual glands are positioned under the floor of the mouth. Parts of the mouth, nose and larynx are also lined with thousands of tiny, minor salivary glands.

Causes

Salivary gland cancer is caused by a mutation in the DNA of salivary gland cells, resulting in abnormal cells that grow and reproduce rapidly to form a tumor. Tumors in the salivary glands can take many forms, and can be benign or malignant.

Symptoms

Symptoms may include a lump of tissue or swelling in a part of the face or neck, pain or numbness in the face or neck, difficulty swallowing, and difficulty opening the mouth wide or moving muscles in parts of the face.

Treatment

Treatment options are determined by the type and seriousness of the cancer. Surgical removal is usually recommended, and if the tumor is benign, no other treatment may be needed. If the tumor is malignant, the patient may also need radiation therapy or chemotherapy.