

PETCT scan requesting guidelines for the diagnostic work-up of head and neck cancer

To identify a head and neck primary site

Neck node cytology or histology suggestive of:

- (i) carcinoma or
 - (ii) squamous lined cyst in a patient ≥ 40 years' old
1. Unknown primary: no primary site identified on clinical examination or MRI scan.
 2. Equivocal primary: possible, but no definite primary site on MRI scan or examination

To exclude distant metastases

3. Nasopharynx cancer, T3-4, or N2-3
4. Hypopharynx cancer, T4
5. N3 disease: nodal mass > 6 cm, or for p16 negative cancer extranodal extension*
6. Supraclavicular fossa lymph node(s)
7. Loco-regional recurrent head and neck cancer

*Tumour beyond nodal fat planes to invade or encase muscles or neurovascular structures

Where a PETCT is done, a separate staging CT thorax is not required.

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