Our medical physics and dosimetry teams worked with our radiation oncologists to develop a 1-to 4-field treatment technique using pencil beam scanning. This new technique enables us to treat complicated Head and Neck cancers with multiple dose levels and bi-lateral neck involvement.

Tumors appropriate for proton therapy include:

- Base of Skull tumors (including, but not limited to, anterior, middle, and posterior cranial fossa, sphenoid and temporal bone-related tumors)
- Sino– Nasal cancers (paranasal sinuses and nasal cavity)
- Cancers located near the orbits/eyes
- Nasopharynx cancers
- Small/early oropharyngeal cancers (tonsils, tongue base)
- Select salivary gland tumors (parotid, sub-mandibular and minor salivary glands of the upper aero-digestive tract)
- Complex skin cancers involving cranial nerves and/or lymph nodes of the neck
- Select patients who have received previous radiation
- Unknown primary cancers (after a thorough surgical work up)
More than 60,000 Americans are diagnosed annually with head and neck cancers. For most patients with head and neck cancers, radiation therapy is part of the treatment protocol.

Proton therapy is a type of external radiation therapy that can be controlled with more precision than X-rays, including Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) and Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT). This means that more energy goes into destroying the tumor, with the goal of minimizing radiation to surrounding healthy tissue. For this reason, proton therapy is particularly good for treating tumors near healthy organs, including the head and neck region.

When treating head and neck tumors, it’s critical to protect organs surrounding the tumor. Proton therapy can potentially reduce damage to eyes, optic nerves, salivary glands, taste buds, the brain and other organs, thereby reducing the likelihood of side effects such as blindness, hearing deterioration and dry mouth. Secondary malignancies in the future are also less likely.

“I felt good enough to walk back and forth from treatment every day - more than five miles a day, and I felt great! SCCA Proton Therapy Center is like a five-star hotel, with very nice people and surroundings.”

- Lin, Head and Neck Cancer Survivor

How do I know if proton therapy will work for me? Many patients with Head and Neck cancers are good candidates for proton therapy. To better understand the use of proton therapy in your treatment, we will schedule a consultation with a radiation oncologist. During the consultation, the oncologist will discuss different treatment options with you to determine if you will benefit from proton therapy.

How many proton treatments will I receive? If proton therapy is selected as the best treatment option, treatments are generally given five days a week for 6-7 weeks, depending on the stage of your cancer and other factors.

Is proton therapy covered by my insurance? Proton therapy is covered by many insurance providers, including Medicare. SCCA Proton Therapy Center’s Patient Navigators can guide you through the process. Please contact us at 206-306-2800 if you have any questions about coverage.

What can I expect with proton therapy at SCCA Proton Therapy Center?
- Proton therapy is given in a state-of-the-art center with specialized medical equipment.
- Treatment and care are provided by a team of specialized doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals.
- Side effects, if they occur, can be treated with medication prescribed by your radiation oncologist.
- The time spent delivering proton therapy to the tumor is only a few minutes, but the entire treatment session may take 20-40 minutes.