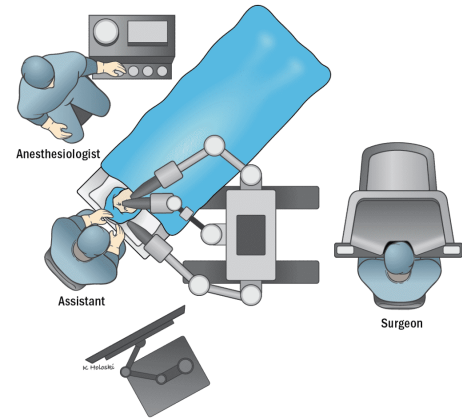




# Transoral Robotic Surgery (TORS)

Transoral Robotic Surgery (TORS) is a surgical approach that uses a robot to remove tumors located in the mouth. The advantage of TORS is that it allows surgeons to access hard-to-reach regions, such as the base of the tongue, tonsils, and throat, using thin robotic arms that do not require a large incision. TORS is a less invasive form of surgery with extremely precise resection.



## TORS Versus Other Procedures

TORS is the latest surgical alternative for treating cancer in the mouth and throat. The other surgical options for managing oral cancer are referred to as “open surgery.” These procedures must be performed manually by the surgeon and are more invasive. In order for the surgeon to reach the cancer in the back of the throat, they must perform a mandibulotomy in which they cut through the jaw. Thus, open surgical procedures are associated with elevated risks of functional deficits and operative complications. TORS spares the jaw from being cut and preserves better patient functionality, while remaining equally effective as other more invasive surgical procedures. TORS procedures are also often shorter and more precise.

## Before Surgery

You will receive specific instructions from your physician for how to appropriately prepare for the procedure, such as when to arrive and food/drink restrictions. In general, patients should not eat or drink anything aside from essential medications after midnight the night before surgery. Patients should reach out to their care team if they have any symptoms of a cold or viral illness before surgery. On the day of your surgery, you will arrive at the hospital a few hours before your scheduled



Please note that this information is intended for educational purposes. It does not replace consultation with your doctor, and it should not be interpreted as medical advice. We encourage you to speak to your health care provider if you have further questions or concerns regarding your medical care.

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<https://thancguide.org/cancer-basics/treatments/surgery/ablative/tors/>

procedure. The nurses, anesthesiologist, and head and neck surgery team will check in with you. If you have any last minute questions, this is a good time to ask them.

## The Surgery

The patient is put to sleep under general anesthesia. Special instruments and retractors are placed in the mouth, allowing the surgeons to better see and reach the area of concern. A 3D camera and two surgical arms are placed within the patient's mouth. The surgeon controls the robot from the surgical console, which provides a 3D view inside the mouth. The surgeon removes the tumor and ensures that no cancer cells remain at the margin of the resection. A neck dissection to remove lymph nodes may precede or follow the robotic part of the operation. If the cancer extends microscopically to or beyond the margins after the procedure, your surgeon may recommend follow up radiation or surgical treatment.

## After Surgery

The duration and course of surgical recovery is case-dependent, but most patients are able to leave the hospital within 2 to 3 days. Occasionally, a few extra days are needed to help manage pain and to allow for swallow rehabilitation. A dedicated discharge planning team will work with your family to ensure you are properly cared for once you leave the hospital. In general, most patients require narcotic pain medication for 2-3 weeks following surgery. Patients will eat a modified diet consisting of pureed or soft foods for roughly 3 weeks following surgery. Many patients will return to their typical diet about 1 month after surgery.

## Frequently-Asked Questions

**How does the robot work?** The robot is constructed using sophisticated technology that allows the surgeon to manipulate its multiple thin arms using a remote control station typically located elsewhere in the operating room. The robotic arms are equipped with all of the instruments the surgeon needs to visualize and resect the tumor.

**How do I find a TORS-certified surgeon?** TORS procedures require extensive surgical training and must be performed by a specialized surgeon. If you qualify for TORS, your physician may refer you to a hospital with staff trained in the procedure. This may require you to travel out-of-state.

**What if I do not qualify for TORS?** TORS is approved for a limited number of conditions. If you have advanced cancer, a history of airway issues, or a small mouth that limits transoral access to the throat, you may be excluded from TORS and must undergo a standard open procedure, instead. However, standard open procedures are equally effective means of removing tumors, and a specialized care team will work with you to ensure you receive the best possible treatment going forward.



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