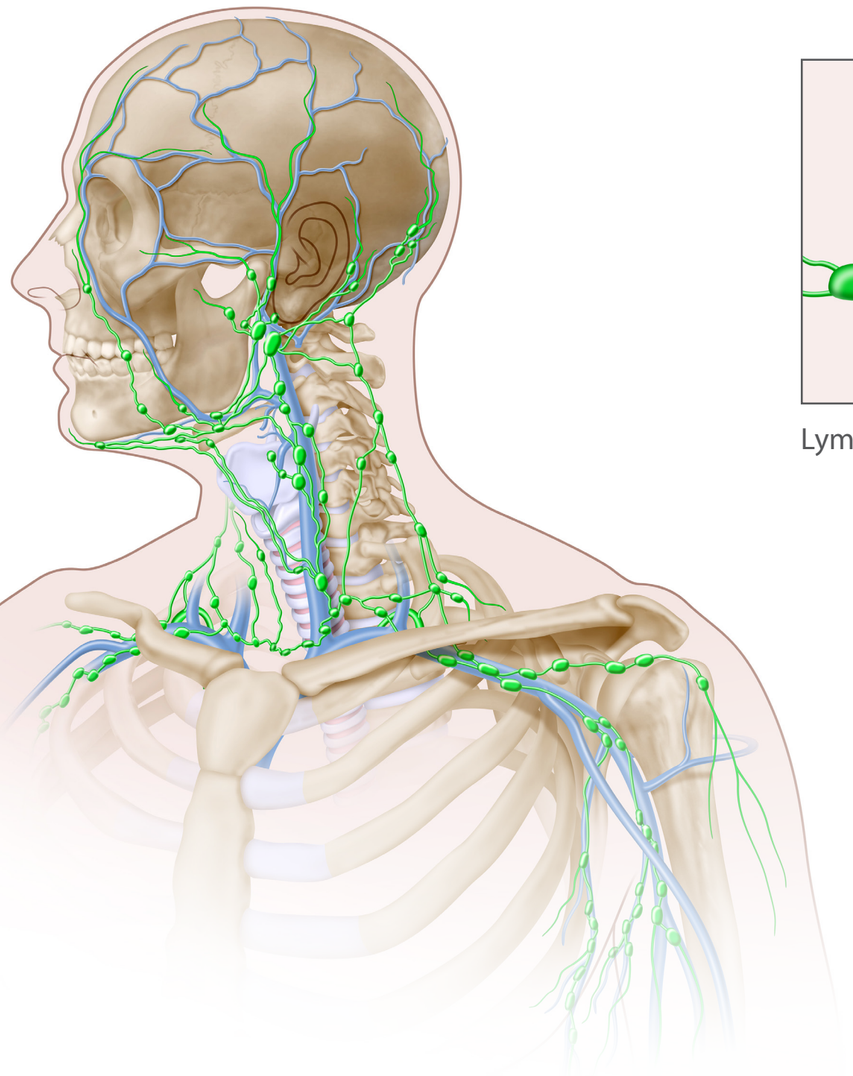
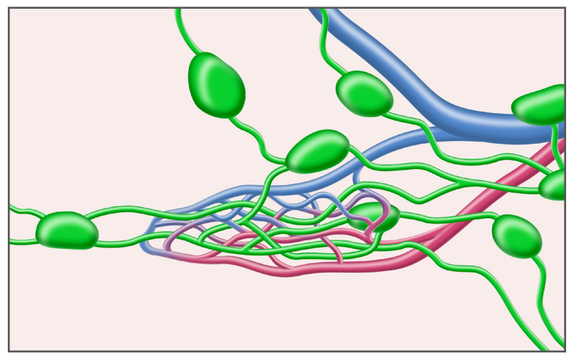
Head and Neck Lymphedema

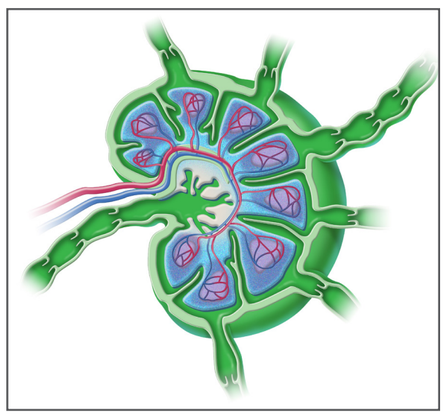
More than one-third of the body's lymph nodes are contained in the head and neck. Surgery and radiation disrupt lymphatic function by removing lymph nodes, cutting lymph vessels, and scarring lymphatic capillaries. More than 90% of head and neck cancer patients develop lymphedema.[1]

Impaired lymphatic drainage leads to swelling, inflammation, and fibrosis of internal and external structures and surrounding tissue. These changes can impair swallowing, breathing, speaking, and range of motion.



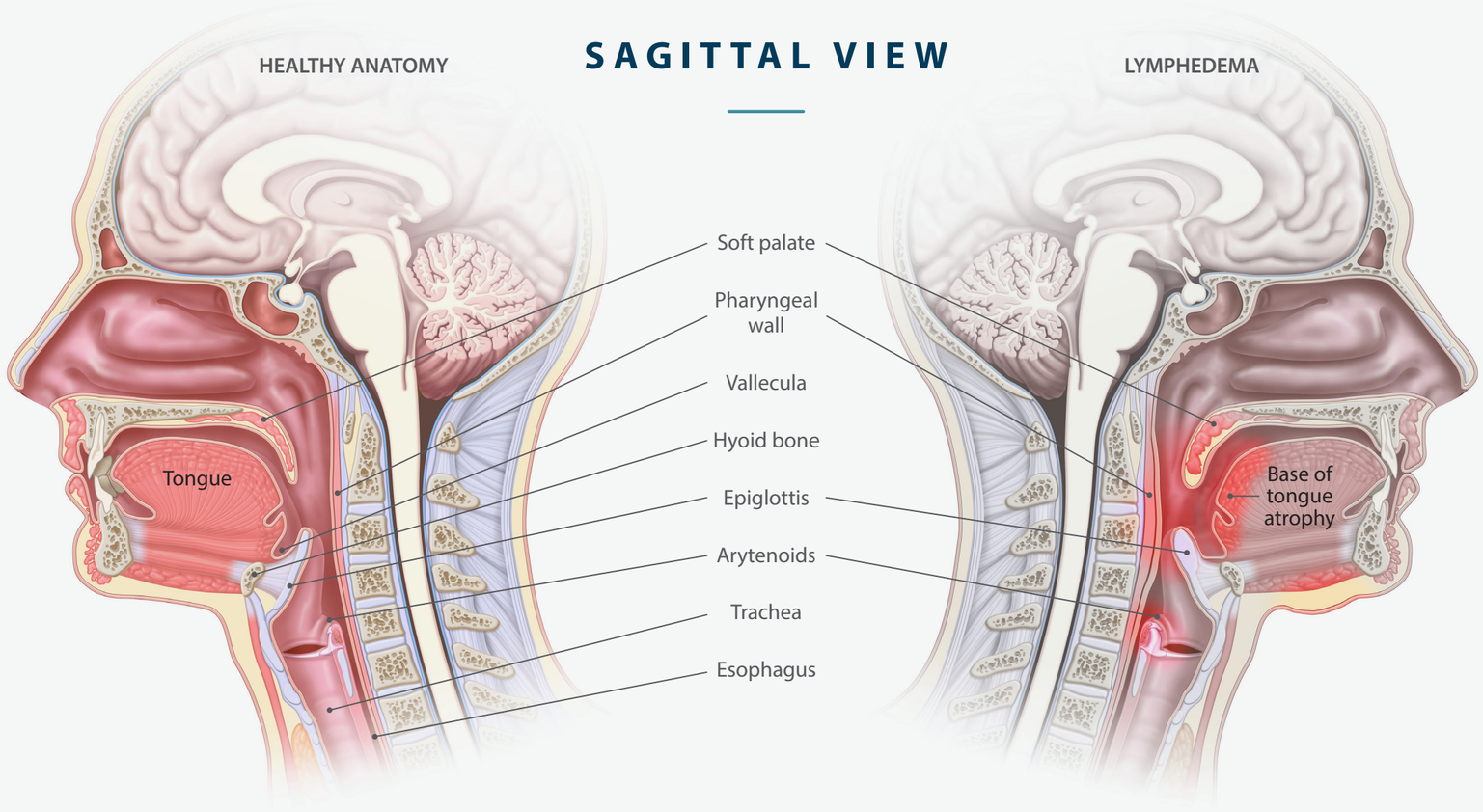


Lymphatics in capillary beds.

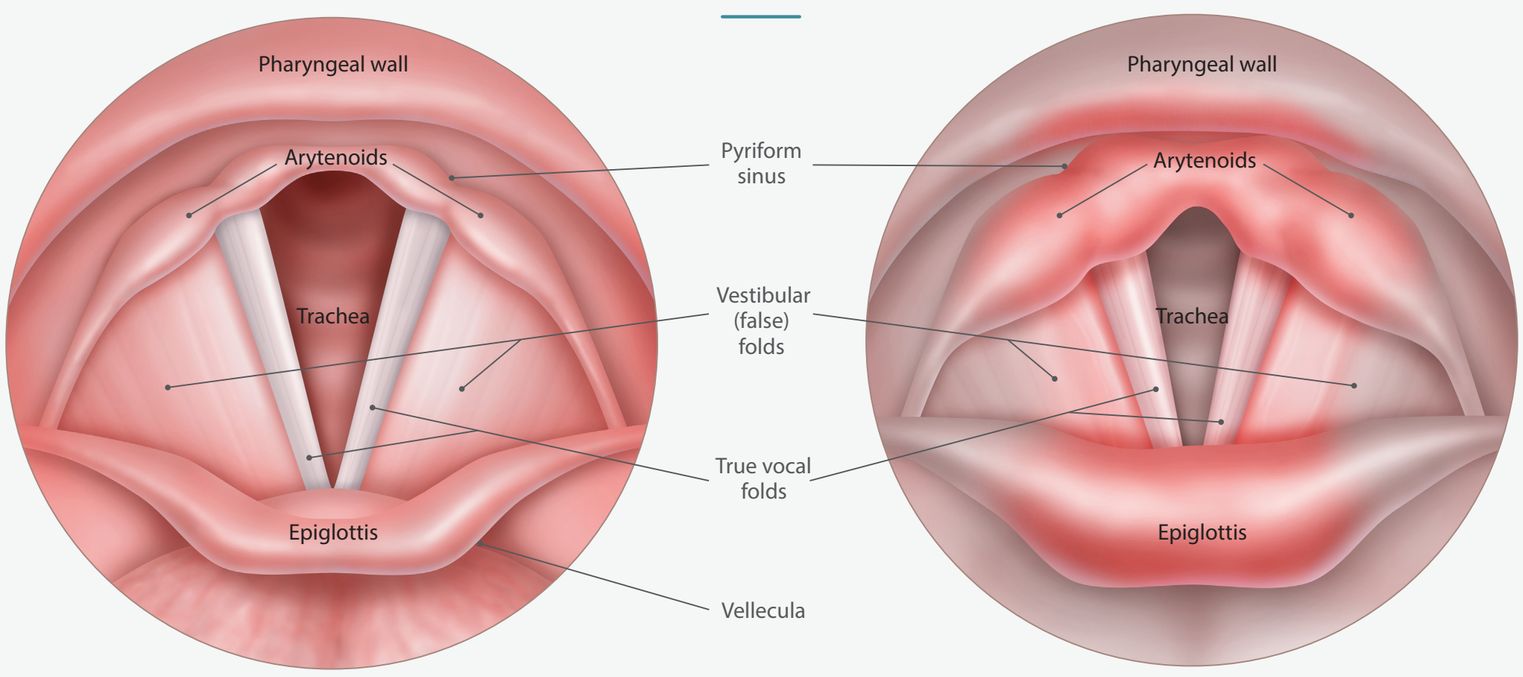


Lymph node with one way valves.

SAGITTAL VIEW



ENDOSCOPIC VIEW



1. Ridner, S.H., et al., A prospective Study of the Lymphedema and Fibrosis Continuum in Patients with Head and Neck Cancer. *Lymphat Res Biol,* 2016. 14(4): p. 198–205.

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