

**Superior Vena Cava Syndrome (SVCS)** is a **medical emergency** caused by **obstruction of blood flow through the superior vena cava (SVC)** — the major vein that drains blood from the head, neck, upper chest, and upper limbs into the heart.

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### ### ☐ Etiology (Causes):

Most common cause: - **Malignancy ( $\approx 85\%$ )**, especially:

1. **Lung cancer** (especially small cell)
2. **Non-Hodgkin lymphoma**
3. **Metastatic cancers (e.g., breast, testicular)**

Other causes: - **Thrombosis** (especially from **central venous catheters or pacemaker wires**) - **Fibrosing mediastinitis** - **Aortic aneurysm or goiter compressing the SVC**

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### ### ☐ Clinical Features:

Symptoms result from **impaired venous return** from the upper body:

- **Facial swelling or fullness** - **Neck and upper limb swelling** - **Distended veins** on chest wall or neck - **Dyspnea**, cough, orthopnea - **Headache, dizziness, visual disturbances** - **Hoarseness** or **dysphagia** (due to local compression) - **Stridor** (if airway is compressed)

Symptoms may be **worse when lying down**.

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### ### ☐ Diagnosis:

- **Clinical suspicion** from history and exam - **Chest X-ray**: may show mediastinal widening or mass - **CT scan with contrast**: preferred imaging to confirm compression or thrombus - **MRI or venography**: alternative if CT is contraindicated - **Biopsy** if malignancy suspected

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### ### ☐ Management:

Depends on **underlying cause and severity**:

#### ☐ Supportive: - Elevate head of bed - Oxygen - Corticosteroids (if lymphoma suspected) - Diuretics (to reduce edema)

#### ☐ Specific: - **Radiation therapy** (often first-line if malignant) - **Chemotherapy** (especially in chemosensitive tumors like lymphoma) - **Endovascular stenting** (rapid symptom relief) - **Anticoagulation** if thrombosis

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### ⚠ Emergency Features: - Stridor - Laryngeal edema - Cerebral edema (confusion, decreased consciousness)

These warrant **urgent intervention**, potentially **airway management** and **stenting**.

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