After Nasal Cavity and Paranasal Sinus Cancer Treatment

Living as a Cancer Survivor

For many people, cancer treatment often raises questions about next steps as a survivor or about the chances of the cancer coming back...

- Living as a Nasal Cavity or Paranasal Sinus Cancer Survivor

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For some people with nasal cavity or paranasal sinus cancer, the end of treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish treatment, but it’s hard not to worry about cancer coming back (recurring). This is very common if you’ve had cancer.

For others, the cancer might never go away completely. Some people may still get regular treatments to try and control the cancer for as long as possible. Learning to live with cancer that does not go away can be difficult and very stressful.

Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan
Talk with your doctor about developing a survivorship care plan for you. This plan might include:

- A suggested schedule for follow-up exams and tests
- A schedule for other tests you might need in the future, such as early detection (screening) tests for other types of cancer, or tests to look for long-term health effects from your cancer or its treatment
- A list of possible late or long-term side effects from your treatment, including what to watch for and when you should contact your doctor
- Recommendations for things you could do to improve your health and even possibly lower the chance for your cancer coming back, such as diet and physical activity suggestions
- Reminders to keep your appointments with your primary care provider (PCP), who will monitor your general health care

**Follow-up care after nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer**

People with cancer of the nasal cavity or paranasal sinuses are at risk for the cancer coming back (a recurrence) and developing new cancers in other parts of the body, so they must be watched closely after treatment. Your cancer care team will discuss which tests should be done and how often based on the type and initial stage of your cancer, as well as the type of treatment you had, and your response to that treatment.

If you have completed treatment, you will probably have follow-up visits with your doctor for many years. It's very important to go to all your follow-up appointments with your doctor. During these visits, you will be asked if you are having any problems and might have exams, endoscopies, lab tests, or imaging tests to look for signs of the cancer returning, a new cancer, or treatment-related side effects.

Almost any cancer treatment can have side effects. Some might last for a few days or weeks, but others might last a long time. Some side effects might not even show up until years after you have finished treatment. Your doctor visits are a good time for you to ask questions and talk about any changes or problems you have noticed or concerns you have.

Don’t hesitate to report any new problems to your doctor right away. This might help your doctor find recurrent cancer as early as possible, when the cancer is small and easier to treat.
Doctor visits and tests

If there are no signs of cancer, many doctors will recommend you have a physical exam, endoscopy, and some of the other tests listed below every 3 to 6 months for the first couple of years after treatment, then every 6 to 12 months for the next few years. People who were treated for early-stage cancers may have doctor visits less often.

**Imaging:** Chest x-rays and other imaging tests might be used to watch for recurrence or a new tumor, especially if you have new symptoms.

**Blood tests:** If you were treated with radiation, it might have damaged your thyroid gland. You will most likely need regular blood tests to check your thyroid function.

**Dental exams:** People treated with radiation may also have problems with dry mouth and tooth decay, so regular dental exams are often recommended.

**Speech, hearing, and swallowing rehabilitation:** Both radiation and surgery can lead to problems with speech, swallowing, and hearing. These are often checked and treated by a speech therapist after treatment (see below). You might also need to see an audiologist (a specialist in hearing loss) for devices, like a hearing aid, to improve your hearing if the treatment changed it.

**Nutrition follow-up:** Cancers of the nasal cavity and paranasal sinuses and their treatments can sometimes cause problems such as trouble swallowing, dry mouth, or even loss of teeth. This can make it hard to eat, which can lead to weight loss and weakness from poor nutrition.

After treatment, you might not gain weight or replace your protein stores as well as you should. A team of doctors and nutritionists can work with you to provide nutrition supplements and information about your individual nutritional needs. This can help you maintain your weight and nutritional intake. Some may even need a feeding tube placed into the stomach for a short time after treatment.

**Quitting smoking:** If you had trouble quitting smoking before treatment, your doctor may recommend counseling as well as medication to help you. It is very important to quit smoking because people with even early-stage nasal cavity or paranasal sinus cancer are at risk of a new smoking-related cancer if they continue to smoke. See Stay Away from Tobacco and call 1-800-227-2345 for more information about quitting smoking.

Keeping health insurance and copies of your medical records
Even after treatment, it’s very important to keep health insurance. Tests and doctor visits cost a lot, and even though no one wants to think of their cancer coming back, this could happen.

At some point after your cancer treatment, you might find yourself seeing a new doctor who doesn’t know about your medical history. It’s important to keep copies of your medical records to give your new doctor the details of your diagnosis and treatment.

**Can I lower my risk of the nasal cavity or paranasal sinus cancer progressing or coming back?**

If you have (or have had) nasal cavity or paranasal sinus cancer, you probably want to know if there are things you can do that might lower your risk of the cancer growing or coming back, such as exercising, eating a certain type of diet, or taking nutritional supplements.

**Quit smoking:** Smoking during cancer treatment can reduce the benefit of treatment and increase the risk of cancer coming back (recurrence). Smoking after treatment can also increase the risk of getting a new smoking-related cancer (see Second Cancers below). **Quitting smoking for good (before treatment starts, if possible) is the best way to improve your chances for survival.** It is never too late to quit.

Adopting behaviors such as eating healthy food, getting regular physical activity, and staying at a healthy weight might help, but no one knows for sure. However, we do know that these types of lifestyle changes can have positive effects on your health that might help lower your risk of nasal cavity or paranasal sinus cancer or other cancers.

**About dietary supplements**

So far, no dietary supplements (including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products) have been shown to clearly help lower the risk of nasal cavity or paranasal sinus cancer progressing or coming back. There might be supplements that will help, but it’s important to know that so far, none have been proven to do so.

In the United States, dietary supplements are not regulated like medicines – they don’t have to be proven effective (or even safe) before being sold—although there are limits on what they’re allowed to claim they can do. If you’re thinking about taking any type of nutritional supplement, talk to your health care team. They can help you decide which ones you can use safely while avoiding those that might be harmful.
If the cancer comes back

If the cancer does recur, your treatment options will depend on the location of the cancer, what treatments you’ve had before, and your overall health. To learn more, see Treatment of Nasal Cavity and Paranasal Sinus Cancers, by Type and Stage.\(^\text{18}\)

For more general information, you may also want to see Understanding Recurrence\(^\text{19}\).

Getting emotional support

Some feelings of depression, anxiety, or worry are normal when cancer is a part of your life. Some people are affected more than others. But everyone can benefit from help and support from other people, whether friends and family, religious groups, support groups, professional counselors, or others. Learn more in Life After Cancer\(^\text{20}\).

Second cancers after treatment

People who’ve had nasal cavity or paranasal sinus cancer can still get other cancers. In fact, nasal cavity or paranasal sinus cancer survivors are at higher risk for getting some other types of cancer.

Cancer survivors can be affected by a number of health problems, but often a major concern is facing cancer again. Cancer that comes back after treatment is called a recurrence. But some cancer survivors may develop a new, unrelated cancer later. This is called a second cancer.

Survivors of nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer can get any second cancer, but they have a higher risk of:

- Cancers of the mouth and throat\(^\text{21}\)
- Cancer of the larynx (voice box)\(^\text{22}\)
- Cancer of the lung\(^\text{23}\)
- Soft-tissue sarcoma\(^\text{24}\)

Most of these cancers are linked to tobacco use (such as smoking and chewing tobacco).

Staying healthy after treatment for nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer
After completing treatment for cancer of the nasal cavity or paranasal sinus, you should still see your doctor regularly. Your doctor may order tests to look for signs that the cancer has come back or spread. These tests are also useful in finding some second cancers, particularly a new lung cancer or cancer of the mouth or throat. Experts don’t recommend any other tests to look for second cancers in patients who don’t have symptoms. Let your doctor know about any new symptoms or problems, because they could be caused by the cancer coming back or by a new disease or second cancer.

Survivors of nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer should follow the American Cancer Society guidelines for the early detection of cancer and stay away from tobacco products. Smoking increases the risk of getting certain second cancers as well as other health problems.

To help maintain good health, survivors should also:

- Get to and stay at a healthy weight and limit the time you spend sitting or lying down
- Keep physically active and follow a healthy eating pattern that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and limits or avoids red and processed meats, sugary drinks, and highly processed foods
- Not drink alcohol. If you do drink, have no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 per day for men

These steps might also lower the risk of some cancers and other health problems.

See Second Cancers in Adults to learn more.

Hyperlinks

References


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