Salivary Gland Cancer - After Treatment

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After Treatment

ON THIS PAGE: You will read about your medical care after cancer treatment is finished and why this follow-up care is important. To see other pages in this guide, use the colored boxes on the right side of your screen, or click ?Next? at the bottom.

After treatment for salivary gland cancer ends, talk with your doctor about developing a follow-up care plan. This plan may include regular physical examinations and/or medical tests to monitor your recovery for the coming months and years.

Most recurrences happen in the first two or three years after diagnosis, so follow-up visits will be more frequent in the first two years. Diagnostic examinations, including CT scans, may be done to watch for any recurrences or to monitor how well treatment is working. People with a history of salivary gland cancer need to be monitored throughout their lifetime for the possibility of recurrence or distant metastasis. ASCO offers cancer treatment summary forms [2] to help keep track of the cancer treatment you received and develop a survivorship care plan once treatment is completed.

Follow-up visits will also help manage any late or long-term side effects from cancer treatment, such as buildup of earwax. Periodic ear examinations are necessary to remove buildup of dried earwax. Prevention of dental cavities [3] is also important. Fluoride application is recommended whenever the oral cavity (mouth) and the salivary glands receive radiation treatment.

Rehabilitation [4] is a major part of follow-up care after head and neck cancer treatment. People may need physical therapy and speech therapy to regain skills, such as talking and swallowing. Supportive care to manage symptoms and maintain nutrition during and after treatment may be recommended. Some people may need to learn new ways to eat or to have foods prepared differently. Special care of the eye is necessary if there is nerve function loss. Special procedures (moving a paralyzed vocal cord to improve voice, for example) may be necessary after removal of a large skull base tumor. Exposure to direct sunlight on affected skin should be avoided if radiation therapy has been used as part of the treatment.

People may look different, feel tired, and be unable to talk or eat the way they used to. Many people experience depression [5]. The health care team can help people cope and connect them with support services.

People recovering from salivary gland cancer are encouraged to follow established guidelines for good health, such as maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, eating a balanced diet, and having recommended cancer screening tests. Talk with your doctor to develop a plan that is best for your needs. Moderate physical activity can help rebuild your strength and energy level. Your doctor can help you create an appropriate exercise plan based upon your needs, physical abilities, and fitness level. Learn more about the next steps to take in survivorship [6], including making positive lifestyle changes [7].

To continue reading this guide, choose ?Next? (below, right) with a list of questions you may want to ask your doctor. Or, use the colored boxes located on the right side of your screen to visit any section.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/25394
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