Nasal Cavity and Paranasal Sinus Cancer

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Overview

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some basic information about these diseases and the parts of the body they may affect. This is the first page of Cancer.Net?s Guide to Nasal Cavity and Paranasal Sinus Cancer. To see other pages, use the colored boxes on the right side of your screen. Think of those boxes as a roadmap to this full guide. Or, click ?Next? at the bottom of each page.

Cancer begins when normal cells in the body change and grow uncontrollably, forming a mass called a tumor. A tumor can be benign or malignant. A benign tumor is not cancerous and usually can be removed without growing back. A malignant tumor is cancerous and can invade and damage the body?s healthy tissues and organs.

Nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer are malignant tumors that begin in the inside of the nose or paranasal cavities around the nose. The nasal cavity is the space just behind the nose where air passes on the way to the throat. The paranasal sinuses are air-filled areas that surround the nasal cavity on the cheeks (maxillary sinuses), above and between the eyes (ethmoid and frontal sinuses), and behind the ethmoids (sphenoid sinuses). The maxillary sinus is the most common location of paranasal sinus cancer.

Nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer are two of the major types of cancer in the head and neck region and belong to a group of tumors known as head and neck cancer [2].

Types of nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer

The nasal cavity and paranasal sinuses contain several types of tissue, and each contains several types of cells. Different cancers can develop from each kind of cell. The differences are important because they determine how fast growing the cancer is and the type of treatment needed.

The nasal cavity and paranasal sinuses are lined by a layer of mucus-producing tissue with the following cell types: squamous epithelial cells, minor salivary gland cells, nerve cells, infection- fighting cells, and blood vessel cells. Some tumor types found in these cells and tissues include the following:

Squamous cell carcinoma. This is the most common type of nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer. Squamous cells are flat cells that make up the thin surface layer of the structures of the head and neck.

Adenocarcinoma. Beginning in the gland cells, this is the second most common type of nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer.

Malignant melanoma. Developing from cells called melanocytes that give the skin its color, this is usually an invasive, fast growing cancer; however, it only accounts for about 1% of tumors found in this area of the body. Learn more about melanoma [3].

Inverting papilloma. These are benign, wart-like growths that may develop into squamous cell carcinoma. Approximately 10% to 15% of these can develop into cancer.

Esthesioneuroblastoma. Related to the nerves that control the sense of smell, this type of cancer occurs on the roof of the nasal cavity and involves a structure called the cribriform plate, a bone located deep in the skull between the eyes and the sinuses. This type of cancer looks similar to neuroendocrine cancer [4], so it is important to figure out which one it is.

Midline granuloma. This refers to a group of several unrelated conditions that cause the breakdown of the healthy tissue of the nose, sinuses, and nearby tissues. Some cases are due to immune system problems, and many others are actually a type of lymphoma (a cancer of the lymph system).

Lymphoma [5]. This is a type of cancer that originates in the lymph tissue within the mucosa (lining) of the nasal cavity and paranasal sinuses.

Sarcoma [6]. Sarcoma is a type of cancer that begins in muscle, connective tissue, or bone.

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Links:

[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/18909
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/19251
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/19437
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