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Nasal Cavity and Paranasal Sinus Cancer - Risk Factors and Prevention

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [1], October / 2012

Risk Factors and Prevention

A risk factor [2] is anything that increases a person?s chance of developing cancer. Although risk factors often influence the development of cancer, most do not directly cause cancer. Some people with several risk factors never develop cancer, while others with no known risk factors do. However, knowing your risk factors and talking about them with your doctor may help you make more informed lifestyle and health care choices.

Two risk factors greatly increase the risk of nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer:

Tobacco use [3]. Use of tobacco (including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, chewing tobacco, and snuff) is the single largest risk factor for head and neck cancer.

Alcohol [4]. Frequent and heavy consumption of alcohol is a risk factor for head and neck cancer.

Eighty-five percent (85%) of head and neck cancer is linked to tobacco use. Using alcohol and tobacco together increases this risk even more. Recent research suggests that people who have used marijuana may be at higher risk for head and neck cancer. Secondhand smoke [5] may also increase a person?s risk of head and neck cancer.

Other factors can raise a person?s risk of developing nasal cavity or paranasal sinus cancer:

Human papillomavirus (HPV). Research indicates that infection with this virus is a risk factor for nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer. HPV is most commonly passed from person to person during sexual activity. There are different types, or strains, of HPV, and some strains are more strongly associated with certain types of cancers. HPV vaccines protect against certain strains of the virus. Learn more about HPV and cancer. [6]

Specific inhalants. Breathing in certain substances, most commonly found in the work environment, may increase the risk of nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer. These substances include:

- Dust from the wood, textiles, or leather industries
- Flour dust
- Nickel dust
- Chromium dust
- Mustard gas
- Asbestos
- Isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol fumes
- Radium fumes
- Glue fumes
- Formaldehyde fumes
- Solvent fumes used in furniture and shoe production

Exposure to air pollution. Being exposed to air pollution may increase a person?s risk of nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer.

Gender. Nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer occurs twice as often in men than women.

Age. This type of cancer is most commonly found in people between the ages of 45 and 85.

Prevention

Although some risk factors for nasal cavity and paranasal sinus cancer cannot be changed, such as a person?s age, several can be avoided by making lifestyle changes. Stopping the use of all tobacco products [7] is the most important thing a person can do, even for people who have been smoking for many years.

Also, avoiding exposure to substances that have been known to increase the risks of cancer or wearing a protective facemask to reduce breathing in potentially harmful substances may help reduce this risk. Workplace exposure and industrial-related hazards can be reduced by appropriate air filtering, and workers in these areas need to be aware of their potential risk of exposure.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/24868
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/25002
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/24981
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/25004
[6] http://www.cancer.net/node/24561
[7] http://www.cancer.net/node/25003