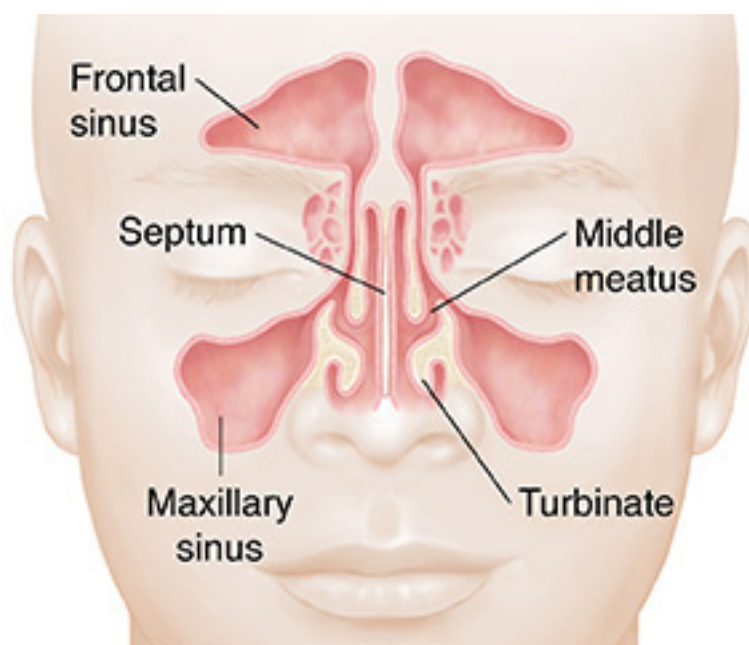


Nasal and Sinus Cancer

The nasal cavity is the open space inside the nose. Air passes through the cavity after entering the nostrils. The nasal septum separates the right and left nasal cavities. A thin barrier made of bone separates the top of the nasal cavity from the cranial cavity. This contains the brain.

If you have any questions, please ask your nurse or physician.

Your face has air-containing cavities called paranasal sinuses (such as the frontal sinus and maxillary sinus). They connect with the air space in the nasal cavity. The nasal cavity and the sinuses make the air that you breathe warmer and wetter before it reaches your lungs.



©2018 Krames Staywell LLC

Different types of tumors can occur in the nose and the sinuses. The choice of therapy and recovery will depend on the type of tumor.

These tumors can spread into the orbit (the bony socket containing the eye) and into the brain since they are close to the nose and sinuses.

Causes of nasal and sinus cancer

Not all patients with tumors in the nose or sinuses have a known risk factor. However, smoking, and exposure to certain chemicals and wood dust can put you at higher risk of cancer in the nose and sinuses. A prior infection with human papilloma virus (HPV) can also put you at higher risk of a tumor in the nose or sinuses.

Symptoms

Many symptoms of tumors in the nose and sinuses are similar to symptoms of more common conditions, such as nasal allergy and chronic sinusitis. This can cause a delay in diagnosis in some cases. If symptoms do not go away, your physician may order imaging studies. These tests can show if you have a tumor.

Patients with benign (non-cancerous) tumors or cancer within the nose and sinuses may have the following symptoms:

- Headaches
- Dirty drainage from the nose
- Nosebleeds
- Nasal blockage
- A lump on the face or in the roof of the mouth
- An eye that sticks out

The cancer can also spread to the lymph nodes of the neck. However, this is uncommon.

How nasal and sinus cancer is diagnosed

If your physician thinks you may have nasal and sinus cancer, you will need to see a head and neck surgeon. They will examine the inside of your nose with a thin, flexible scope (fiber-optic endoscope). This shows the location and extent of the tumor within the nose and sinuses.

To confirm a cancer diagnosis, your surgeon will perform a biopsy. That means the surgeon will remove a small piece of tissue from the tumor to check the type of cancer. The surgeon may do this in the office. However, if anesthesia is needed, the surgeon will do it in the operating room.

The surgeon may order imaging studies, including CT, MRI and PET scans, to see a clearer picture of the tumor size and location. The scans also look for any spread of disease into the lymph nodes, lungs or bones.

You may need to see other specialists if the tumor is near the brain, eyes, mouth or other delicate areas. These specialists can guide you on the best treatment options to remove the tumor and repair the area.

Resources

[cancer.gov/types/head-and-neck/patient/adult/paranasal-sinus-treatment-pdq](https://www.cancer.gov/types/head-and-neck/patient/adult/paranasal-sinus-treatment-pdq)

For more information, please contact:

Head and Neck Multidisciplinary Clinic at Northwestern Memorial Hospital

Galter Pavilion, 675 North Saint Clair Street

Suite 15-200

Chicago, Illinois 60611

Phone: 312.695.8182 (TTY: 711)

Fax: 312.695.6298