

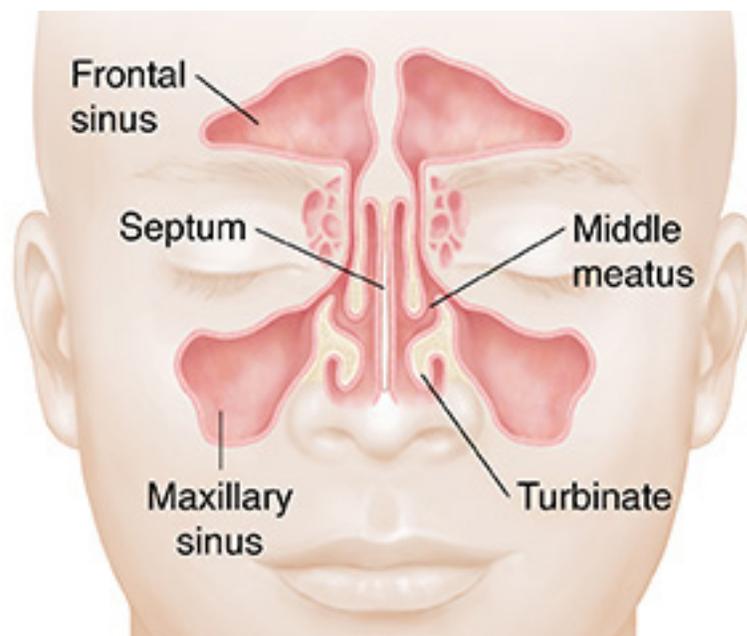
Nasal and Sinus Cancer

What is nasal and sinus cancer?

The nasal cavity is the open space inside the nose through which air passes after entering the nostrils. The right and left nasal cavities are separated by a partition called the nasal septum. A thin partition of bone separates the top of the nasal cavity from the cranial cavity, which contains the brain.

The paranasal sinuses (such as the frontal sinus and maxillary sinus) are air-containing cavities in the face, which connect with the air space in the nasal cavity. The nasal cavity and the sinuses help to warm and moisten the air that we breathe before it reaches the lungs.

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



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Different types of tumors can arise within 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 these structures are close to the nose and sinuses.

What causes 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 are associated with a high risk of cancer in the nose and sinuses. Certain tumors are associated with a prior infection with human papilloma virus (HPV).

What are the symptoms?

Many of the symptoms of tumors in the nose and sinuses are similar to the symptoms of more common conditions such as nasal allergy and chronic sinusitis. This can cause a delay in diagnosis in some cases. If the symptoms do not resolve, imaging studies can be done to rule out the presence of 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
- A protruding eye

Although uncommon, the cancer can also spread to the lymph nodes of the neck.

How is nasal and sinus cancer diagnosed?

An evaluation by a head and neck surgeon is needed to accurately outline the extent of the cancer. The physician 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.

A biopsy is a procedure in which a small piece of tissue is removed from the tumor to check the type of cancer. Often, this can be done in the office. However, if anesthesia is needed, the procedure will be done in the operating room.

Imaging studies, including CT, MRI and PET scans, may be ordered to obtain a clearer picture of the tumor size and location. The scans will also look for any spread of disease into the lymph nodes, lungs or bones.

Patients may also need an evaluation by other specialists if the tumor is near the brain, eyes, mouth or other delicate areas. These specialists can advise on the best treatment options to remove the tumor and repair the area.

Resources:

www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/treatment/paranasalsinus/Patient

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

Fax: 312.695.6298

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Head and Neck Multidisciplinary Clinic