



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Head and Neck Cancer: Moving to Life After Treatment

Congratulations on completing your treatment for head and neck cancer! Your next step is post-treatment care. This information explains what happens over the next few years.

The first 30 months (2 and a half years) after treatment

When your treatment is done, you will meet with your head and neck care team. You will keep seeing them on a regular schedule every few months. During this post-treatment period, please talk with your care team if you have concerns about your health.

During this period, it's important to see your primary care provider for routine care. If you do not have a primary care provider, we encourage you to find one. You should also see your dentist for regular dental cleanings every 3 to 6 months.

This chart shows your schedule for the first 30 months after your cancer treatment ends (the date you finish radiation). You will have follow-up visits with your treatment team, including your surgeon, radiation oncologist, and medical oncologist.

Months after your treatment ends	How often you see your care team	What happens during the visit	Who will see you
0 to 24 months (0 to 2 years)	Every 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical exam. • Flexible endoscopy, if your doctor orders it. • PET scan at 3 months. • Thyroid lab tests. 	Primary cancer treatment team. You may see different team members each visit.
24 to 30 months (2 to 2.5 years)	Every 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical exam. • Flexible endoscopy, if your doctor orders it. • Thyroid lab tests. 	Primary treatment team. You may see different team members each visit.

Starting 30 months (2 and a half years) after treatment

Your risk of cancer coming back is very low 30 months after your treatment. We call this the long-term phase. You will be cared for by our head and neck long-term and Survivorship providers. Your care and survivorship clinic visits will help you maintain a healthy, good quality of life.

During this period, we will:

- Screen for cancer that came back and any new cancers of the head and neck.
- Manage long-term side effects of your treatment.
- Screen for other cancers and health problems.

You no longer need regular follow-up visits with your treatment team. Instead, you will have clinic visits. Here's an example of a follow-up visit schedule for the next few years:

Months after your treatment ends	How often you see your care team	What happens during the visit	Who will see you
30 to 60 months (2.5 to 5 years)	Every 12 months (once a year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical exam. • Flexible endoscopy, if your doctor orders it. • Thyroid lab tests. 	Your care team during this long-term phase.
5 years and later	Every 12 months (once a year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam. • Flexible endoscopy, if your doctor orders it. • Thyroid lab tests. • Carotid ultrasound at your 5-year visit. 	Your care team during this long-term phase.

You need a lung cancer screening (CT scan of your chest) if you:

- Are age 50 or older.
- Have smoked an average of 1 pack a day for 20 years or a similar amount (2 packs a day for 10 years).

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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