

## Head and Neck Cancer Survivorship Care Guideline

### What Is the American Cancer Society Head and Neck Cancer Survivorship Care Guideline?

The Head and Neck Cancer Survivorship Care Guideline has recommendations from the American Cancer Society to help doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals provide care for head and neck cancer survivors who have finished cancer treatment. The cancer survivorship care guideline addresses issues that can occur in head and neck cancer survivors after their treatment.

### Why Is the Head and Neck Cancer Survivorship Care Guideline Needed?

- Each year, almost 62,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with head and neck cancer. Many of these patients will receive treatment and survive for many years.
- Starting at diagnosis and until the end of treatment, patients with head and neck cancer receive most of their health care from specialists, such as a surgeon, medical or radiation oncologist, etc. Once treatment is finished, most of the medical care for these patients will be provided by their primary care doctor.
- Head and neck cancer occurs mostly in older people, and many of them have other health issues that are treated by primary care doctors.
- Possible side effects can be ongoing and may even occur after treatment is complete. Side effects can be caused by the cancer or by the treatments. Here are some examples:
  - Shoulder pain; strength or range of motion changes
  - Neck pain or muscle spasms
  - Problems opening mouth or jaw spasm; swelling or pain
  - Difficulty swallowing or acid reflux
  - Swelling of face, neck, or chest
  - Tiredness or lack of energy
  - Taste changes
  - Hearing loss
  - Sleep problems
  - Speech or voice changes
  - Weight gain, constipation, dry skin, or sensitivity to cold due to an underactive thyroid

- Dry mouth, tooth decay, painful or bleeding gums
- Body appearance and self-image changes
- Worry, sadness, or fear

### What Is Included in This Guideline?

The guideline provides recommendations to:

- Help your specialists and primary care doctor work together to meet your health care needs.
- Help you get well or stay well through physical activity, a healthy diet, and quitting tobacco if you use it.
- Watch for the return of head and neck cancer and use screening tests to look for other types of cancer.
- Watch for symptoms that could be side effects of head and neck cancer and its treatment.

### How Should I Use This Guideline?

The guideline has important information you should talk about with your primary care doctor.

- Did my specialist (surgeon, medical or radiation oncologist, etc) give a written survivorship care plan to my primary care doctor that described my treatment, possible side effects, and important follow-up care?
- How often will I need check-ups? What tests will I need to check for side effects, the cancer returning, or new cancers? What other doctors should I see for that care?
- Is there anything I can do to help relieve my physical or mental side effects after cancer treatment? If so, when should I start taking these steps?

As you finish your treatment, think about the care you will get as you move forward. You will want your primary care doctor to know about your head and neck cancer history and how it was treated. You will also want them to know what symptoms to watch for and how often to see you. And most important, you will want your primary care doctor to work with you so you get the care that is right for you. ■

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