NHS
Oxford University Hospitals
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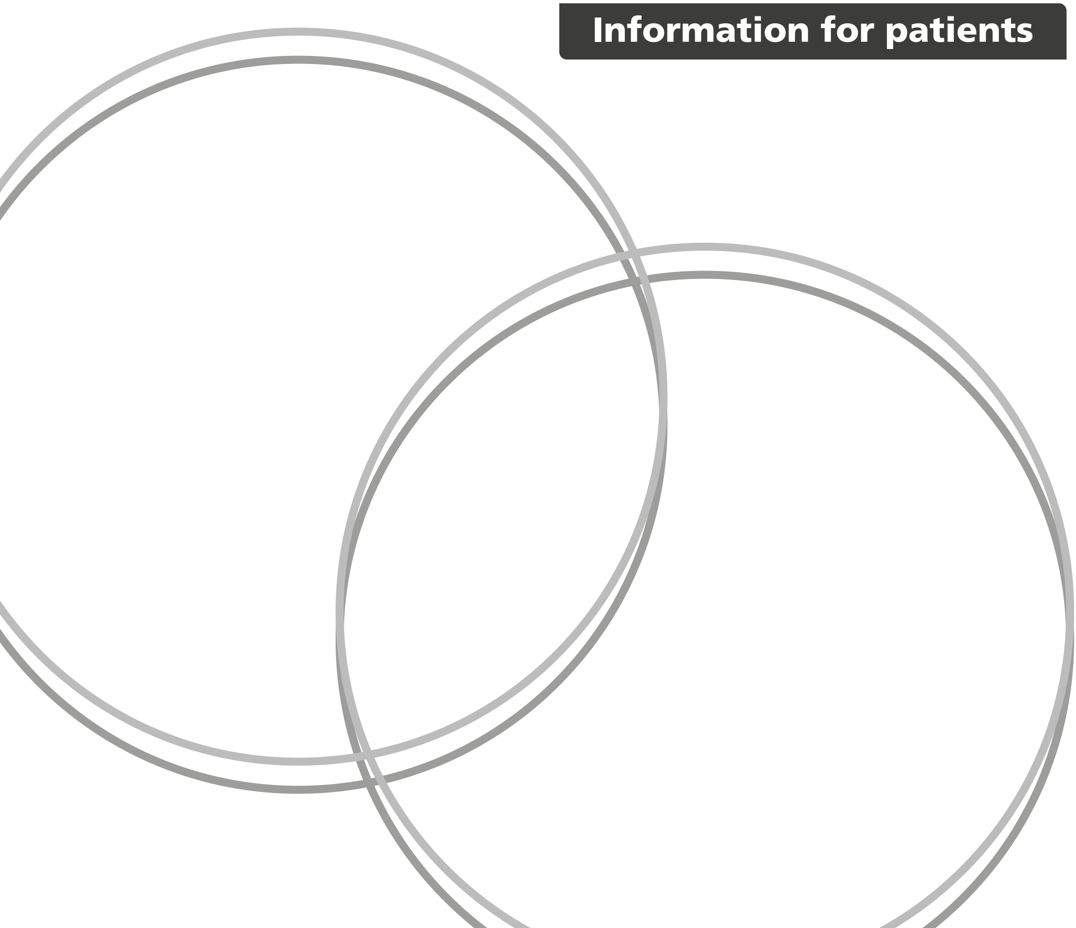
Now that you have finished your treatment

Information for patients



Oxford Centre for Head and Neck Oncology

Recovering from your treatment

Everyone recovers at different speeds after treatment, and you may find it takes a little longer than you expected to fully adjust to the ‘New You’. How long this takes will depend greatly on the treatment you have had, as well as how you are feeling emotionally and physically. The team will be happy to discuss what is realistic for you to expect.

Try to pace your activities so that you don’t become overtired; building up steadily towards your goals. The team will continue to support you for as long as you find it helpful.

Appointments and your follow-up plan

You will be seen regularly for check-ups every one to three months during the first two years, then every three to six months during the third, fourth and fifth years after completing your treatment.

After five years you will be discharged, but you will still be able to contact the team if you have any concerns. You may also be offered telephone contact or appointments for on-going support from dietitians, speech and language therapists, or specialist nurses.

Other investigations

Depending on where your cancer was, you may have a scan (usually an MRI or PET scan) three to four months after your treatment is completed. This is to get a new baseline scan, to show how things look after your treatment. Your original scans, from before your treatment started, will look very different.

If, in the future, you need a scan to find out what is causing a problem, then this after-treatment scan can be used to compare with the new scan. You may also have a yearly chest X-ray to monitor your health, if your Consultant feels that this is necessary.

What to do if you have any concerns about your health

If you have concerns about a symptom and are not due to be seen in a clinic within the next two weeks, please contact your GP, your Specialist Nurse or a member of the team. If you have any of the following symptoms and they do not clear up within two weeks, do not wait until your next appointment. Please call your Specialist Nurse for advice and they will arrange for you to be seen without delay.

- development of new lump/bump in your neck
- noisy breathing
- worsening voice quality
- new mouth ulcer or white patch
- increased difficulty swallowing
- increased pain.

Finding support after treatment

When you have finished your treatment, your Head and Neck Specialist Nurse may carry out an assessment to identify any concerns you may have. The nurse can then give you advice on how these concerns can be addressed. They can also put you in touch with any support services that may be able to help.

If you feel that you have no particular concerns at this point in time, your Specialist Nurse will not need to arrange a further appointment, but they will still be available for you to contact, should you want to in the future.

Maggie's Centres

Maggie's Centre offers practical, emotional and social support to people with cancer and their family and friends. It is free of charge and no referral is needed. The Oxford Maggie's Centre is located in the timber 'tree-house' building, outside the main entrance of the Churchill Hospital. It is open from Monday to Friday, from 9.00am to 5.00pm.

There is also an online centre, where you can contact the team for support, as well as read and share experiences with other people on the same journey.

Website: **www.maggies.org**

Support includes:

- professionally trained staff to discuss the issues of living with cancer and to provide emotional and practical support
- a well-stocked library and online facilities
- clinical psychologist
- daily courses and workshops in cancer specific groups, for information and support
- benefits advisor
- nutritionist
- a place to sit quietly with a cup of tea.

Patient support groups

You may find it helpful to contact other people who have been through similar treatment and experiences. Heads2gether also offer a helpline with trained supporters.

Website: **www.heads2gether.net**

Tel: **0800 023 4550**

There are also local laryngectomy clubs; please ask your Speech and Language Therapist for details about your nearest one. Further information and support is also available through the National Association of Laryngectomy Clubs.

Website: **www.laryngectomy.org.uk**

Online forums

Please note that we do not monitor online forums or chat rooms, and whilst we are aware you might find them helpful, we would encourage some caution when using them. If you have any questions or concerns arising from using a forum, we will be happy to discuss them and clarify what applies to your personal situation.

Benefits advice

A Macmillan benefits advisor is available every day in the Radiotherapy department, between 10.00am and 2.00pm, from Monday to Friday. There is also a benefits advisor at the Maggie’s centre.

Tel: **01865 227 083**

Managing nutrition and swallowing difficulties

If you have concerns about eating or drinking, nutrition or maintaining your weight, the Speech and Language Therapists and dietitians will be available to help. If you have been given exercises, try to do them frequently and regularly, as they will help you to recover your swallowing function.

You may need to build up what you are able to eat or drink, with carefully chosen foods and drinks; the team will advise you on what sorts of things are suitable. The Speech and Language Therapists and dietitians will be available to see you at your follow-up appointments.

Managing speech or voice difficulties

Try to continue with any voice or speech clarity/articulation exercises you have been given, frequently and regularly. If you are struggling to make yourself understood or you have concerns (for example, your speech and returning to work, or using the telephone), please ask to see the Speech and Language Therapist when you come for your follow-up appointment. They can give you further advice.

Dental care and dental restoration

Following your treatment you may be advised to see a dental therapist, for treatment of gum disease and care of your teeth and mouth.

Where possible, teeth that needed to be removed before your treatment might be replaced over a series of visits with the Consultant of restorative dentistry.

It is important to stay registered with your own dentist locally, as we do not offer any emergency dental care or regular dental examinations. Much of your regular dental care can be completed by your own dentist. We can discuss this with you and your dentist.

Exercise and physiotherapy referrals

After any chemotherapy or radiotherapy treatment it is important to continue to exercise. This will help you to build up and maintain your strength and energy following your treatment.

If you have had an operation, your physiotherapist will

have talked with you about referring you on to your local physiotherapy outpatient clinic. At this clinic they will gradually increase your exercises and help you to work towards regaining your full strength and ability to move around. Whilst you are waiting for your appointment, please continue with the exercises you have been given. Your exercises should not be painful;

an ache or a pull is ok. If you feel you need to rest from the exercises for a day or two because they are uncomfortable then please do.

If you have any concerns about exercise let your team know when you return to clinic, or speak with your outpatient physiotherapist.

You can return to driving when you feel you can look over each shoulder comfortably.

How to contact us

You can contact any member of the team through the Specialist Nurses.

Tel: **01865 234 346**

There is an answerphone service available, giving our available hours and the option to leave a message.

Email: **headandneck.specialistnurses@nhs.net**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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