

The Impact of Multiple Nonmelanoma Skin Cancers: A Guide for Patients

By Taylor Arnoff

Non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) is the most common type of cancer, and the number of people with this disease continues to increase. Though NMSC rarely leads to death, the diagnosis and treatment of these cancers can affect your quality of life (QOL).

Up to 38% of patients have multiple NMSC, and up to 25% have at least two skin cancers treated within one year. Moreover, over 67% will be diagnosed with another skin cancer within ten years of their first NMSC diagnosis. Patients with multiple NMSC are more likely to have their skin cancer come back or to have more advanced skin cancers.

Being diagnosed with NMSC can significantly affect your mental wellbeing. Up to 25% of patients who receive a cancer diagnosis experience symptoms of depression, and up to 45% experience anxiety. If you have already been diagnosed with NMSC in the past, these symptoms may be more severe. These symptoms may affect your ability and willingness to receive additional treatments, your QOL, and your health outcomes.

Most NMSC are treated with surgery, which can interfere with your daily life activities and be expensive. If you are older, you may be less likely to proceed with surgery for multiple NMSC because of unnecessary risks, pain, and costs. Additionally, scarring and changes to your appearance following surgery can impact your wellbeing, and having numerous surgeries can make these factors more obvious. When patients have multiple NMSC, they are more likely to have larger areas involved that require more complex surgical procedures, and this can worsen the appearance. After surgical treatment, general, physical, and mental health have all been shown to decrease in older patients. Complications after surgery, even in minor surgeries, can have a negative effect on your wellbeing, which can last for more than one year. If there is a long recovery time or permanent changes to your appearance, depression and anxiety can arise or worsen. If you require additional surgeries for multiple NMSC, depression and anxiety may interfere with your immune system. Your body may not be able to heal as well, and outcomes following surgery can be worse.

It is important to discuss with your doctor any concerns you have about the burden of managing your NMSC, as well as the impact that this burden may have on your wellbeing and ability to perform daily activities. If you have multiple NMSC, you are more likely to feel overwhelmed by managing your skin cancers. As a result, you may grow tired of going to multiple appointments and be less likely to receive treatment. How involved your treatment will be as well as any potential complications may influence your decision to proceed with surgery. If you have multiple NMSC you may be less likely to notice an improvement, even after surgery. As a result, you may be less likely to undergo additional surgeries that your doctor recommends.

You should also talk to your doctor about your ability to afford treatments, get to frequent appointments, undergo surgery, and be able to balance treatment with the other demands of your daily life. Cost, your support at home, your understanding of your diagnosis, prior surgeries for NMSC, and your physical and mental health can all impact your ability to receive surgery after multiple diagnoses. If you have multiple NMSC, you can easily feel a strong burden that may

interfere with your care, and can worsen your outcomes. Your doctor can discuss ways to make treating your multiple NMSC most manageable for you.

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It is important to discuss with your loved one's doctor any concerns you or your loved one may have about the burden of managing your NMSC, as well as the impact that this burden may have on their wellbeing and ability to perform daily activities. If your loved one has multiple NMSC, they are more likely to feel overwhelmed by managing their skin cancers. As a result, they may grow tired of going to multiple appointments and be less likely to receive treatment. How involved their treatment will be as well as any potential complications may influence their decision to proceed with surgery. If they have multiple NMSC, they may be less likely to notice an improvement, even after surgery. As a result, your loved one may be less likely to undergo additional surgeries that their doctor recommends.

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surgery after multiple diagnoses. If your loved one has had multiple NMSC, they can easily feel a strong burden that may interfere with their care, and can worsen your outcomes. Their doctor can discuss ways to make treating multiple NMSC most manageable.

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