



Post Treatment and the Road to Recovery

Completing treatment for head and neck cancer is a major milestone and something to be incredibly proud of. Many people expect to feel immediately better once treatment ends, but recovery is often gradual and can take weeks, months, or even longer. It is common to experience a mixture of emotions, including relief, exhaustion, uncertainty, and concern about what the future may hold. This stage is about healing, rebuilding strength, and adjusting to a new normal.

In the weeks following treatment, side effects may temporarily continue or even worse before they begin to improve. You may still experience fatigue, mouth soreness, dry mouth, thick mucus, changes in taste, difficulty swallowing, weight loss, and stiffness or swelling in the neck and shoulders, particularly if you have had a neck dissection or radical neck dissection. If you had a feeding tube during treatment, it may remain in place until you are able to maintain your weight and hydration safely by mouth. Speech and language therapists, dietitians, physiotherapists, and specialist nurses will work with you to support your recovery.

Follow-up appointments are an important part of post-treatment care. Your healthcare team will monitor your progress, arrange scans if need and look for any signs that the cancer has returned. These appointments also provide an opportunity to discuss ongoing symptoms, emotional wellbeing, and practical concerns such as returning to work, managing finances, and rebuilding confidence. It is normal to feel anxious before each appointment, and many people find reassurance in discussing these feelings openly with their care team and support network.

Recovery is about much more than physical healing. Changes in speech, swallowing, appearance, and energy levels can affect self-esteem and relationships. Some people experience fear of recurrence, low mood, or a sense of isolation after the intensity of treatment ends. Connecting with others who have lived through similar experiences can provide practical advice, understanding, and hope. Over time, many people regain confidence and discover new ways to adapt and thrive.

The Swallows is here to support you long after treatment has finished. Our 24/7 Support Line and Text Support Service, support groups, educational resources, and patient community can help you navigate the challenges of survivorship. Whether you need practical guidance, emotional reassurance, or simply someone who understands, you do not have to face recovery alone.

24/7 Support Line

07504 725 059



24/7 Text Line

07830 929 400