

BRAIN TUMOR



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

An abnormal growth in the brain that may be benign or malignant. A non-malignant brain tumor may cause as much disability as a malignant tumor unless it is treated appropriately.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Headaches that worsen when lying down.
- Vomiting with nausea, or sudden vomiting without nausea.
- Vision disturbances, including double vision.
- Weakness on one side of the body.
- Lack of balance; dizziness.
- Loss of sense of smell.
- Memory loss.
- Personality changes.
- Seizures.

CAUSES

Some tumors begin in the brain (primary tumors), but most brain tumors have spread from other cancers especially cancer of the breast, lungs, intestines or malignant melanoma of the skin. Symptoms are caused by increasing pressure in the skull as the tumor enlarges.

RISK INCREASES WITH

The following risk factors are related to cancers in other body parts that spread to the brain:

- Poor nutrition, especially a low-fiber diet (intestinal cancer).
- Smoking (lung cancer).
- Excess alcohol consumption (liver cancer).
- Excess sun exposure (malignant melanoma).
- Previous cancer at any other body site.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Practice breast self-exam.
- Don't smoke.
- Eat a high-fiber diet.
- Protect yourself from excessive sun exposure by using sunscreens and protective clothing.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Brain tumors that are not treated lead to death or permanent brain damage. Bones of the skull restrict a tumor's outward growth, so the brain is compressed as a tumor grows.
- If a tumor is discovered and treated early with surgery or radiation therapy and chemotherapy, full recovery is often possible.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Disability and death if a tumor is inoperable because of size or location.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Many different techniques are used to locate the site of a brain tumor: EEG, computed tomography (CT scan), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI scan), X-rays of the skull, bones, lungs and gastrointestinal tract.
- A biopsy of the tumor will most likely be necessary to confirm the diagnosis.
- Laboratory studies of blood and cerebrospinal fluid.
- When possible, surgery (craniotomy) to remove the tumor or as much of it as is feasible (to remove pressure on the brain).
- Radiation therapy may be given.
- Additional information available from the Association for Brain Tumor Research, 2720 River Rd., Des Plaines, IL 60018, (708) 827-9910.

MEDICATIONS

- Cortisone drugs to diminish swelling of the brain tissue.
- Anticonvulsant drugs to control seizures.
- Pain relievers.
- Anticancer drugs.

ACTIVITY

Stay as active as your strength allows. Work and exercise moderately. Rest when you tire.

DIET

Eat a normal, well-balanced diet. Vitamin and mineral supplements may be necessary if you cannot eat normally.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of a brain tumor.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.