

Primary Brain Tumors

What is a primary brain tumor?

A tumor that begins anywhere in the brain is called a primary brain tumor.

Who gets primary brain tumors?

If you have had high-dose radiation, which is sometimes used to treat cancer and other conditions, you are more likely to get a primary brain tumor.

Many things that people worry about have been looked into and have been proven not to cause primary brain tumors. This list includes alcohol use, cellular telephone use, chemicals (for example, those found in hair dyes), low-grade electromagnetic fields (for example, from power lines), and chemicals and other substances that you might come in contact with at certain job sites.

What are the symptoms?

Primary brain tumors can cause headaches, but most people with headaches do not have a tumor. Other symptoms include seizure, weakness on one side of the body, problems with vision, and problems with walking.

You should see your doctor if you have new or changing headaches that do not go away after a month, are worse when you move, and cause you to vomit or have seizures.

How are primary brain tumors treated?

They are treated with a combination of surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. The treatment is usually done by a team of expert doctors in a specialized hospital. The type of treatment used depends on many factors, including the patient's age and health; the tumor type, location, and size; and the likelihood that the tumor will spread or come back after treatment.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

National Brain Tumor Society
<http://braintumor.org/brain-tumor-information>

National Cancer Institute
<http://www.cancer.gov/types/brain>

February 2016

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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