

BRAIN TUMORS: *Signs You Don't Want to Ignore*

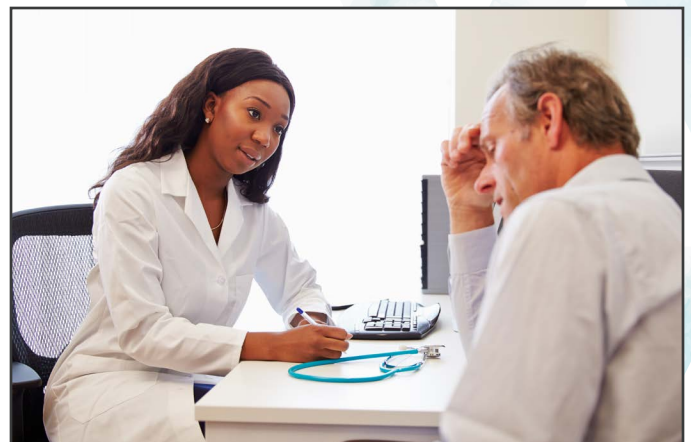
Did you know that brain tumors are unlike any other tumors in the body? For one, no one knows what causes brain tumors; there are only a few known risk factors that have been established by research. Second, a tumor in the brain isn't like tumors in other parts of your body because it has limited room for growth because of the skull. When a brain tumor grows, it can squeeze vital parts of the brain and lead to serious health problems. That's why learning about the possible symptoms of brain tumors can help you know when to tell a doctor about them.

POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS OF A BRAIN TUMOR

The symptoms of a brain tumor depend on its size, type, and location. The most common ones are listed below. These do not mean you have a brain tumor. But talk with your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- » Severe headaches
- » Muscle jerking or twitching (seizures or convulsions)

- » Nausea and vomiting
- » Changes in speech, vision, or hearing
- » Problems balancing or walking
- » Changes in your mood, personality, or ability to concentrate
- » Problems with memory
- » Numbness, tingling, or weakness in the arms or legs



WHAT KINDS OF BRAIN TUMORS ARE THERE?

A tumor that starts in the brain is called a primary brain tumor. People of all ages can develop this type of tumor, even children. And there are many different ways they can form.

There are over 130 different types of primary brain tumors, and about 80,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with a primary brain tumor each year.

Cancer that has spread to the brain from another part of the body is called a metastatic brain tumor. Metastatic brain tumors are far more common than primary tumors.

Both primary and metastatic brain tumors can cause similar symptoms. Symptoms depend mainly on where the tumor is in the brain.

Other symptoms are less obvious. For example, you might notice memory problems or weakness on one side of your body. Until symptoms develop, you may not know you have a brain tumor.

If you have symptoms that suggest a brain tumor, tell your doctor. Your doctor will give you a physical exam and ask about your personal and family health history. You may need to have additional tests. Tumors can be detected by imaging methods such as MRI or CT scans.

Usually, brain tumor treatment requires a team of health care professionals. This may include surgeons, cancer specialists, nutritionists, nurses, and mental health providers. The team does more than treat the tumor. They also try to minimize its impact on a patient's quality of life.

WHAT IS A TUMOR?

A tumor is a mass of tissue that's formed by an accumulation of abnormal cells. Normally, the cells in your body age, die, and are replaced by new cells. With cancer and other tumors, something disrupts this cycle. Tumor cells grow, even though the body does not need them, and unlike normal old cells, they don't die. As this process goes on, the tumor continues to grow as more and more cells are added to the mass.

What's the Difference Between Benign and Malignant Brain Tumors?

Benign brain tumors are noncancerous. Malignant primary brain tumors are cancers that originate in the brain, typically grow faster than benign tumors, and aggressively invade surrounding tissue. Although brain cancer rarely spreads to other organs, it can spread to other parts of the brain and central nervous system.

