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Editorial

Brain Tumor in Humans

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EDITORAL

A brain tumor is a collection, or mass, of abnormal cells in your brain. Your skull, which encloses your brain, is very rigid. Any growth inside such a restricted space can cause problems. Brain tumors can be cancerous (malignant) or noncancerous (benign). When benign or malignant tumors grow, they can cause the pressure inside your skull to increase. This can cause brain damage, and it can be life-threatening.

Brain tumors are categorized as primary or secondary. A primary brain tumor originates in your brain. Many primary brain tumors are benign. A secondary brain tumor, also known as a metastatic brain tumor, occurs when cancer cells spread to your brain from another organ, such as your lung or breast.

EXPOSURE TO RADIATION

People who have been exposed to ionizing radiation have an increased risk of brain tumors. You can be exposed to ionizing radiation through high-radiation cancer therapies. You can also be exposed to radiation from nuclear fallout. The nuclear power plant incidents in Fukushima and Chernobyl are examples of how people can be exposed to ionizing radiation.

Symptoms of brain tumors depend on the location and size of the tumor. Some tumors cause direct damage by invading brain tissue and some tumors cause pressure on the surrounding brain. You'll have noticeable symptoms when a growing tumor is putting pressure on your brain tissue.

BRAIN TUMORS DIAGNOSES

Diagnosis of a brain tumor begins with a physical exam and a look at your medical history. The physical exam includes a very detailed neurological examination. Your doctor will conduct a test to see if your cranial nerves are intact. These are the nerves that originate in your brain. Your doctor will look inside your eyes with an ophthalmoscope, which is an instrument that shines a light through your pupils and onto your retinas. This allows your doctor to check how your pupils react to light. It also allows your doctor to look directly into your eyes to see if there's any swelling of the optic nerve. When pressure increases inside the skull, changes in the optic nerve can occur.

CT SCAN OF THE HEAD

CT scans are ways for your doctor get a more detailed scan of your body than they could with an X-ray machine. This can be done with or without contrast. Contrast is achieved in a CT scan of the head by using a special dye that helps doctors see some structures, like blood vessels, more clearly.

MRI OF THE HEAD

If you have an MRI of your head, a special dye can be used to help your doctor detect tumors. An MRI is different from a CT scan because it doesn't use radiation, and it generally provides much more detailed pictures of the structures of the brain itself.

Brain tumors can cause breaks or fractures in the bones of the skull, and specific X-rays can show if this has occurred. These X-rays can also pick up calcium deposits, which are sometimes contained within a tumor. Calcium deposits may be in your bloodstream if your cancer has moved to your bones.

Early treatment can prevent complications that can occur as a tumor grows and puts pressure on the skull and brain tissue. See your doctor if you're worried about any symptoms you're experiencing.

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