

# Brain Tumors

**T**umors (growths) may occur in the brain. These tumors may be **benign** (noncancerous) or **malignant** (cancerous). Even noncancerous tumors may cause compression of the brain tissue, so they may need to be aggressively treated or removed surgically. Malignant brain tumors may be **primary** (cancers of the brain tissue itself) or **metastatic** (spread from a cancer somewhere else in the body). The February 2, 2005, issue of *JAMA* includes an article about primary malignant brain tumors.

## TYPES OF BRAIN TUMORS

Primary brain tumors are named according to the tissue from which they arise. They include glioblastoma (the most common type of primary brain tumor and the most aggressive form of astrocytoma) and meningioma. Some types of brain tumors are more common in children than in adults, and children are more likely to develop primary brain tumors than adults. Metastatic tumors in the brain are commonly associated with cancers of the lung, breast, and colon.

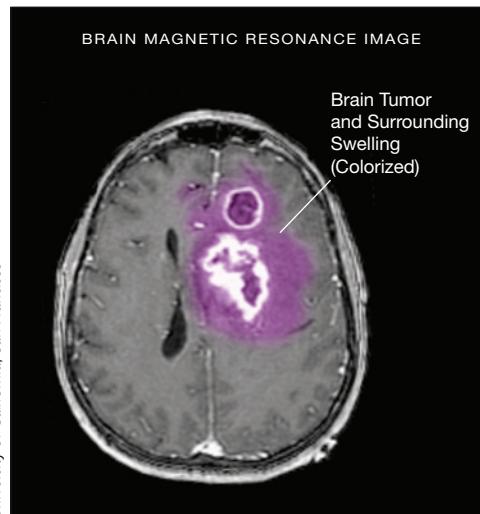
## SYMPTOMS

- Headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- **Seizures** (sudden attacks involving changes in consciousness, movements, or sensations caused by bursts of electrical activity in the brain)
- Dizziness
- Weakness in hands, arms, feet, or legs
- Blurred or disturbed vision
- Slurred speech or difficulty finding words
- Decreased memory or concentration

## DIAGNOSIS

Symptoms similar to those of brain tumors may occur in individuals with other neurological disorders, so in addition to taking a medical history and performing a physical examination, your doctor may order scans such as a **computed tomography (CT)** scan and **magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)** that show the internal structures of the brain. The tumor type is confirmed by examining a sample taken from the tumor site. This is delicate surgery performed by **neurosurgeons** (doctors with specialized training in surgery of the nervous system).

University of California, San Francisco



Sources: American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

## TREATMENT

Treating brain tumors may be difficult because of their location. Surgery is used in many cases. **Chemotherapy** (cancer drug treatments) and **radiation** (high-energy x-ray) therapy may be used to decrease the size of brain tumors. **Dexamethasone**, a steroid medication, can decrease brain swelling. Antiseizure medication may be given to treat or prevent seizures associated with brain tumors.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American Brain Tumor Association  
800/886-2282  
[hope.abta.org/site/PageServer](http://hope.abta.org/site/PageServer)
- National Brain Tumor Foundation  
800/934-2873  
[www.braintumor.org](http://www.braintumor.org)
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke  
[www.ninds.nih.gov](http://www.ninds.nih.gov)

## INFORM YOURSELF

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