PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Meningioma

About Meningioma

Meningioma is a type of brain tumor that develops in the meninges. The meninges are the tissues that surround your brain and spinal cord.

Meningiomas usually start within your skull, but they can also start in your spine. Most people with a meningioma will have only 1 tumor in 1 place, but it's possible to have many tumors growing at the same time in different parts of the brain and spinal cord.

Most meningiomas are benign (non-cancerous). Some meningiomas can be malignant (cancerous), but this is rare. Even if they aren't cancerous, they can still cause serious problems because of where they might be located. If they grow too large, they can affect how your brain works, and they can also be a problem if they're too close to important nerves or blood vessels.

People that have had radiation to their brain or spinal cord have a greater risk of developing a meningioma. Hormonal changes or your genetic (DNA) make up may also put you at a higher risk for developing a meningioma.

Symptoms of Meningioma

Most meningiomas grow slowly and don't cause any symptoms.

If you do have symptoms, they can be different depending on where the tumor is located. Symptoms can include:

- Headaches
- Changes in your vision, such as double vision or vision loss

- Changes in your hearing such as ringing in your ears or hearing loss
- Changes in speaking, such as trouble saying what you're thinking
- Numbness or weakness in your arms or legs
- Trouble balancing or coordinating
- Memory loss
- Loss of smell
- Seizures (changes in the brain's electrical activity)
- Changes in personality

Other things can also cause these symptoms. Call your doctor if you have any of these symptoms or if you have a change in these symptoms.

Diagnosing Meningioma

You will need imaging scans of your head such as computed tomography (CT) scans or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to diagnose a meningioma.

Treatment for Meningioma

Treatment for a meningioma depends on the size of the tumor and where it's located.

If your meningioma is slow growing and doesn't cause any symptoms, you might not need treatment. You may need brain MRIs every year to see if it's growing and should tell your doctor if you start to have any symptoms. If your meningioma is cancerous, causing symptoms, or growing quickly, you may need to have surgery to remove it.

Some meningiomas can't be removed because they're near parts of your brain that control important functions. In this case, you may have radiation therapy to stop them from growing. If you had surgery to remove the meningioma and the whole tumor wasn't removed, you may also need radiation therapy to stop the tumor from growing. In rare cases, you may need to have chemotherapy or other treatments.

There are clinical trials that study different treatments for meningiomas. For more information about clinical trials at Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK), ask your doctor or go to www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/clinical-trials/search.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Meningioma - Last updated on June 13, 2019

All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center