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Cancer Center

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Medical oncologist Diane Reidy-Lagunes is part of our multidisciplinary team dedicated to caring for patients with adrenal tumors.

Adrenal tumors form in the adrenal glands. These two glands, located above the kidneys, are part of your endocrine system, which produces hormones that regulate different bodily functions.

Each adrenal gland has a cortex (an outer layer) and a medulla (an inner region). The cortex releases hormones that affect your metabolism (the way your body converts what you eat and drink into energy), blood pressure, and physical characteristics, like body shape and where and how much hair grows on your body. The medulla makes hormones that affect how your body responds to stress.

Your adrenal glands produce four common hormones. If you have an adrenal tumor, it may affect the production of these hormones:

Cortisol (released by the cortex) Cortisol affects your metabolism and helps you recover from physical stress and infection.

Aldosterone (released by the cortex) Aldosterone regulates your sodium and potassium levels, which affect blood pressure and the balance of fluids and electrolytes (water and salt) in your body.

DHEA (released by the cortex) Your body uses DHEA to make male sex hormones (androgens) and female sex hormones (estrogens). Your DHEA level usually goes down after you turn 30.

Catecholamines (released by the medulla) Catecholamines (epinephrine and norepinephrine) influence how your body responds to stress or fear. They can increase your heart rate, blood pressure, breathing, strength, and alertness.

Adrenal tumors are not always cancer

Benign adrenal tumors are noncancerous, so they don't metastasize, or spread, to other parts of the body. These types of tumors are often found by chance when you're having diagnostic tests done for something unrelated.

Functional adrenal tumors are usually benign, although some are capable of becoming cancerous and spreading. Benign functional tumors can still produce hormones and may be found during tests for hormone-related symptoms.

Malignant adrenal tumors, which are cancerous, are diagnosed in only 300 to 500 people each year, and they are usually adrenal cortical carcinomas. Certain genetic conditions may increase the risk for these tumors.

Symptoms

Symptoms of adrenal tumors depend on which type of tumor you have and where it is located. Common symptoms include a rise in blood pressure, unexplained weight gain or weakness, dramatically increased thirst or urination, or other symptoms.

Request an Appointment

Call [800-525-2225](tel:800-525-2225)

Available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. (Eastern time)

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