

About Brain Tumors

A tumor that begins in the brain is called a primary brain tumor. Cancer that spreads to the brain from another part of the body is different from a primary brain tumor.

Lung cancer, breast cancer, kidney cancer, melanoma, and other types of cancer commonly spread to the brain. When this happens, the tumors are called metastatic brain tumors.

Treatment for secondary brain tumors depends on where the cancer started and the extent of the disease.

Estimated new cases and deaths from brain and other nervous system tumors in the United States in 2017:

New cases: 23,800

Deaths: 16,700

Brain cancer represents 2.8% of all cancer deaths in the U.S.

Risk factors:

- **Ionizing radiation:** Ionizing radiation from high dose x-rays (such as radiation therapy from a large machine aimed at the head) and other sources can cause cell damage that leads to a tumor. People exposed to ionizing radiation may have an increased risk of a brain tumor, such as meningioma or glioma.
- **Family history:** It is rare for brain tumors to run in a family. Only a very small number of families have several members with brain tumors.

Researchers are studying whether using cell phones, having had a head injury, or having been exposed to certain chemicals at work or to magnetic fields are important risk factors. Studies have not shown consistent links between these possible risk factors and brain tumors, but additional research is needed.

Symptoms of an adult brain tumor:

- Headaches (usually worse in the morning)
- Nausea or vomiting
- Changes in speech, vision, or hearing
- Problems balancing or walking
- Changes in mood, personality, or ability to concentrate
- Problems with memory
- Muscle jerking or twitching (seizures or convulsions)
- Numbness or tingling in the arms or legs

Treatment:

People with brain tumors have several treatment options. The options are surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy. Many people get a combination of treatments.

The choice of treatment depends mainly on the following:

- The type and grade of brain tumor
- Its location in the brain
- Its size
- Your age and general health