Glioma Tumors

What is a glioma?
Gliomas (glee-O-mas) are common primary brain tumors. A primary brain tumor is a tumor that starts in the brain. The two most common types of gliomas are astrocytomas and oligodendroglioma.

- Astrocytomas are tumors that start in the cells that make up the “glue-like” or supportive tissue of the brain, called astrocytes. They are the most common type of glioma.
- Oligodendroglialomas are tumors that start in the cells that cover and protect the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, called oligodendrocytes.

Some gliomas grow slowly over years while others may grow much faster. A glioma that is growing fast might be described as aggressive. An aggressive glioma is more likely to grow back after surgery. Gliomas tend to stay close to where they began and rarely spread outside the brain.

What are the symptoms of a glioma?
A glioma may not cause symptoms until it has grown large and begins pushing on the brain. You might see different symptoms depending on its size, where it is, and how fast it is growing. Here are some of the most common symptoms that you might see:

- Headache
- Seizures
- Confusion or trouble thinking
- Memory loss
- Changes in speech, vision or hearing
- Nausea and vomiting
- Trouble with balance or walking
- Numbness or tingling in arms or legs
- Changes in personality or mood

Who is at risk of having a glioma?
There are no lifestyle risks for developing a glioma.

How are gliomas graded?
Grading is a system used to describe how quickly a tumor is growing and how likely it is to come back after treatment. To grade your tumor, it will be tested by a lab after it is removed through surgery or a needle biopsy.
Glioma tumors have 4 grades:

- Grade I- These are rare, slow growing tumors that may not need treatment.
- Grade II or low grade gliomas- These tumors usually affect younger adults. Although they are less aggressive, they can grow with or without treatment and may cause symptoms and harm to the brain. They may change to a grade III or IV over time.
- Grade III or Anaplastic Glioma- This high-grade tumor grows faster and is more aggressive than grade II gliomas. They may change to a grade IV over time.
• Grade IV Glioblastoma Multiforme (GBM) – This is the most common type of glioma. This tumor can affect people of any age, but are most often found in older adults. It is the most aggressive and serious type of brain tumor.

How are gliomas treated?
Gliomas are hard to cure because it is difficult to remove every tumor cell. You and your doctor will decide what treatment options are best for you. This might depend on the size and location of your tumor, your symptoms, and your age.

Usually these tumors require treatment that may include:
• Surgery to take out as much of the tumor as possible, called a craniotomy
• Radiation therapy after surgery
• Chemotherapy

Talk all of this over with your doctor so that together you can decide the best treatment for you.

Are there complications?
Complications from a glioma tumor or treatment will depend on your tumor size and location and the type of treatment you have. These might include:
• Difficulty concentrating
• Memory loss
• Personality changes
• Changes in speech, vision, and hearing
• Trouble walking or moving
• Seizures

There are things you can do to help with the complications of your brain tumor or treatment. You might want help with pain or stress for example. Here are some ideas:
• Yoga
• Acupuncture
• Massage
• Meditation
• Music therapy
• Guided imagery
• Relaxation exercises

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