Meningioma Tumors

What is a meningioma?
Meningiomas (muh-nin-je-oh-muh) are the most common kind of brain tumor, accounting for about 30 percent of all brain tumors. They grow from the layers of membrane (called the meninges) that cover the brain and spinal cord, not from the brain tissue.

Most meningiomas grow slowly over months or years and do not spread to other parts of the body. A meningioma that is growing fast might be described as aggressive. An aggressive meningioma is more likely to grow back after surgery.

What are the symptoms of a meningioma?
A meningioma 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
- Memory loss
- Changes in vision, hearing or smell
- Nausea and vomiting
- Trouble with balance or walking
- Seizures
- Trouble moving your arms or legs

Who is at risk for a meningioma?
There are no lifestyle risks for developing a meningioma. You could develop a meningioma at any age, but it is usually found in older adults, especially women. Some older adults who were exposed to radiation therapy of the head as a child might be at higher risk.

How is a meningioma 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. Meningiomas are divided into three grades:

- Grade I or benign meningiomas – These are the most common type of benign (not cancerous) meningiomas. About 8 out of 10 meningiomas are grade I. These meningiomas are slow-growing.
- Grade II or atypical meningiomas – Atypical meningiomas usually grow faster than benign meningiomas and are more likely to grow back after surgery.
- Grade III, anaplastic, or malignant meningiomas – Malignant meningiomas are a form of brain cancer. They grow fast and are most likely to grow back after surgery. These are rare. Only about 3 out of 100 meningiomas are grade III.
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How is a meningioma treated?
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. Treatment may include:

- Observation (sometimes called watching and waiting)
- Surgery
- Radiation
- Sometimes chemotherapy, but this is rare

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 meningioma 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
- Seizures
- Loss of vision, hearing or smell
- Mobility issues

There are things you can do to help with the complications of your brain tumor or treatment. Here are some ideas:

- Yoga
- Acupuncture
- Massage
- Meditation

- Music therapy
- Guided imagery
- Relaxation exercises