

Pituitary Tumor: Treatment Choices



Different types of treatments can be used for pituitary tumors. The one that's best for you depends on things like:

- If the tumor is cancer. Most pituitary tumors are not cancer (benign)
- If the tumor is smaller than 1 cm (a microadenoma)
- If the tumor is larger than 1 cm (a macroadenoma)
- If the tumor makes hormones (a functional tumor)
- What kinds of hormones the tumor makes
- If and what kind of symptoms and problems the tumor is causing
- Where the tumor is and if it is pushing on nearby tissues
- Your age and overall health
- Your personal concerns and preferences, like what side effects you'll find acceptable

Learning about your treatment options

You may have questions and concerns about your treatment options. You may also want to know how you'll feel, how you'll look, how your body will look after treatment, and if you'll have to change your normal activities.

Your healthcare provider is the best person to answer your questions. They can explain what your treatment choices are, how well treatment is expected to work, and what the risks and side effects may be.

Your healthcare provider may advise a specific treatment. Or they may offer more than one, and ask you to decide which one you'd like to use. It can be hard to make this decision. It's important to take the time you need to make the best decision.

Deciding on the best plan may take some time. Talk with your healthcare provider about how much time you can take to explore your options. You may want to get a second opinion before deciding on your treatment plan. This might help you feel better about the choices you're making. The peace of mind a second opinion gives you may be well worth the effort. You may also want to include your partner, spouse, family, or friends in this process.

Types of treatment for pituitary tumors

Pituitary tumors may be treated with:

- Surgery
- Radiation therapy
- Chemotherapy
- Medicines that stop the tumor from making hormones

If the tumor is not causing any problems, treatment may not even be needed. In this case, watchful waiting or active surveillance is done. This means you are watched closely and have blood or urine tests done regularly to check for tumor growth. Treatment is then started if the tumor starts causing problems.

Goals of treatment

Each type of treatment has its own goal:

Surgery. The goal of surgery is to remove the whole tumor from the pituitary gland. Sometimes the whole pituitary gland must be removed. Medicines are then needed to replace the hormones that the pituitary gland used to make.

Radiation. The goal of radiation therapy is to kill the tumor using beams of high-energy X-rays or particles. This treatment is often used when:

- Surgery can't be done.
- Medicine isn't controlling the symptoms caused by the tumor.
- All of the pituitary tumor can't be removed during surgery.
- The pituitary tumor comes back after surgery.

Chemotherapy. The goal of chemotherapy (chemo) treatment for a pituitary tumor is to improve symptoms and quality of life. It can help stop cancer cells from growing.

Medicines to block hormone production. The goal of this treatment is to stop functional tumors from making excess hormones that affect other parts of the body. For some kinds of pituitary tumors, this may be the only treatment needed.

Clinical trials for new treatments

Healthcare providers are always finding new ways to treat pituitary tumors. These new methods are tested in clinical trials. Taking part in a clinical trial means you get the best treatment available today, and you might also get new treatments that are thought to be even better. Before starting treatment, talk with your healthcare provider to find out if there are any clinical trials you should think about.

Talking with your healthcare provider

At first, thinking about treatment options may seem overwhelming. Talk with your healthcare providers, nurses, and loved ones. Make a list of questions. Think about the benefits, risks, and possible side effects of each option. Discuss your concerns with your provider before making a decision.

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