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Ganglioneuroblastoma

Ganglioneuroblastoma is an intermediate tumor that arises from nerve tissues. An intermediate tumor is one that is between benign (slow-growing and unlikely to spread) and malignant (fast-growing, aggressive, and likely to spread).

Causes

Ganglioneuroblastoma mostly occurs in children ages 2 to 4 years. The tumor affects boys and girls equally. It occurs rarely in adults. Tumors of the nervous system have different degrees of differentiation. This is based on how the tumor cells look under the microscope. It can predict whether or not they are likely to spread.

Benign tumors are less likely to spread. Malignant tumors are aggressive, grow quickly, and often spread. A ganglioneuroma is less malignant in nature. A neuroblastoma (occurring in children over 1 year old) is usually malignant.

A ganglioneuroblastoma may be only in one area or it may be widespread, but it is usually less aggressive than a neuroblastoma. The cause is unknown.

Symptoms

Most commonly, a lump can be felt in the abdomen with tenderness.

This tumor may also occur at other sites, including:

- Chest cavity
- Neck
- Legs

Exams and Tests

The health care provider may do the following tests:

- Fine-needle aspiration of the tumor
- Bone marrow aspiration and biopsy
- Bone scan
- CT scan of the affected area

- MRI scan of the affected area
- PET scan
- Metaiodobenzylguanidine (MIBG) scan
- Special blood and urine tests
- Surgical biopsy to confirm diagnosis

Treatment

Depending on the type of tumor, treatment can involve surgery, and possibly chemotherapy and radiation therapy.

Because these tumors are rare, they should be treated in a specialized center by experts who have experience with them.

Support Groups

More information and support for children with ganglioneuroblastoma and their families can be found at:

- Children's Oncology Group -- www.childrensoncologygroup.org [<https://www.childrensoncologygroup.org>]
- The Neuroblastoma Children's Cancer Society -- neuroblastomachildrencancersociety.org/ [<https://neuroblastomachildrencancersociety.org/>]

Outlook (Prognosis)

The outlook depends on how far the tumor has spread, and whether some areas of the tumor contain more aggressive cancer cells.

Possible Complications

Complications that may result include:

- Complications of surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy
- Spread of the tumor into surrounding areas

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your provider if you feel a lump or growth on your child's body. Make sure children receive routine examinations as part of their well-child care.

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