



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Brain Tumors

If you've been diagnosed with a brain tumor, you may have neurological symptoms, and you'll need treatment for your symptoms as well as for your tumor. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Benign	A tumor that is unlikely to spread or cause lasting problems to your health if it is treated. Benign tumors can cause serious symptoms and must be removed, but they are unlikely to come back after treatment.
Malignant	An aggressive tumor that can cause a substantial threat to your health. Malignant brain tumors may grow rapidly, spread within the brain, or spread in the spine. A malignant tumor can be treated with surgical excision, chemotherapy, and/or radiation. It is possible for a malignant brain tumor to return after it is surgically removed.
Metastatic	A cancer that began somewhere in the body and traveled to another location. Malignant tumors can become metastatic, and all metastatic tumors are malignant.
Primary and Secondary Tumors	A primary brain tumor is a brain tumor that starts in the brain, and a secondary brain tumor is due to metastatic spread of another primary tumor.
Seizure	An episode characterized by an alteration in consciousness, possibly with involuntary movements of the body. Often, a seizure is the first sign of a brain tumor.
Edema	Fluid swelling in the body. Fluid can develop around a brain tumor as the tumor grows. Brain edema can exacerbate neurological symptoms, such as seizures and vision changes.
Brain Imaging	Imaging studies of the brain can be used to assess the size and location of brain tumors. The most common and reliable brain imaging studies include CT and MRI, usually with contrast.
Lumbar Puncture (Spinal Tap)	An invasive procedure in which a doctor places a needle in your lower back to collect spinal fluid.
Biopsy	A sample of tissue that is taken and examined under a microscope to see if there is cancer, an infection, or another condition.
Stereotactic	A minimally invasive procedure that your doctors can use to obtain a biopsy or to remove your tumor. A stereotactic procedure generally requires a small hole in the skull, and the surgery is performed with the guidance of imaging technology.
Craniotomy	A surgical procedure that involves removal of a part of the skull.

