You have just been told that you have a brain tumor and suddenly, everything in your life has changed. Questions fill your mind. What is a meningioma? Can this tumor be cured? What kinds of treatments are available? How much of a risk to life and health are you facing? How will you discuss this with your family and your employer? Will your life ever return to the way it was before?

The first step in learning about your diagnosis is to stop and take a breath. As you face this medical challenge, remember that you are not alone. Thousands of people are diagnosed with meningiomas each year. Many of them have successful treatments, allowing them to return to a productive and satisfying life.

A meningioma (meh-ninn-je-oh-mah) is a type of tumor that develops from the meninges (meh-NINN-jeez), the membrane that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. There are three layers of meninges, called the dura mater, arachnoid and pia mater. Most meningiomas are categorized as benign tumors. However, unlike benign tumors elsewhere in the body, benign brain tumors can cause disability and may sometimes be life threatening. In many cases, benign meningiomas appear to grow slowly. This means that depending upon where it is located, a meningioma may reach a relatively large size before it causes symptoms. Other meningiomas grow more rapidly, or have sudden growth spurts. Some meningiomas are classified as atypical or malignant tumors. There is no way to predict the rate of growth of a meningioma, or to know for certain how long a specific tumor was growing before diagnosis. Although most people develop a single meningioma, it is also possible to have several tumors growing simultaneously in different parts of the brain and spinal cord. When multiple meningiomas occur, more than one type of treatment may have to be used.

Meningiomas appear to develop about twice as frequently in women as in men, although they can occur in both sexes and at any age. They are the only variety of central nervous system tumor diagnosed more often in women than in men. According to the most recent statistics from the Central Brain Tumor Registry of the United States (CBTRUS), meningiomas are the most common type of primary brain tumor. Unlike a metastatic brain tumor that spreads to the brain from another site in the body, a primary brain tumor originates in the central nervous system. It is estimated that about 26% of primary brain tumors are meningiomas.

In rare cases, when a meningioma is causing symptoms that present a threat to life or health, immediate treatment may be needed. The most common treatment for a meningioma is surgery (removal of all or part of the tumor). Different types of radiation are also being used for treatment of selected meningiomas. Each type of treatment has some risks and benefits, and not every treatment is possible for every meningioma. The size and location of the tumor(s), your age and overall state of health, and which medical center you choose for your treatment will influence this decision. Several major medical centers in the United States will review copies of medical records, MRI and CT scans, and other information to provide a free or low cost “second opinion” about brain tumor treatments.

After treatment, follow up care is very important. Unfortunately, meningiomas sometimes reoccur after surgery or radiation. Recurrent tumors may develop in other parts of the brain or spinal cord, which means that they can cause symptoms that are different from the original meningioma. Follow up MRI or CT scans every one to three years are an important part of long term health care for anyone who has been diagnosed with a meningioma. There is no way to predict whether or not anyone with a meningioma diagnosis will develop a recurrent tumor, or how quickly any untreated meningioma may grow.

The only known risk factor for meningiomas is previous exposure to ionizing radiation of the head, such as that which may have occurred during treatment for a prior brain tumor. Some people with a disease called Neurofibromatosis (NF) appear to have a higher rate of developing meningiomas and other tumors called acoustic neuromas (more accurately known as vestibular schwannomas). Certain chromosomal abnormalities have been associated with meningioma development. Except for those instances, there is no way to know why any individual develops a meningioma.

Although the cause of these tumors is most often unknown, there are certain factors that may affect meningioma growth in some people. There is evidence that in women, exposure to elevated levels of female hormones may promote meningioma growth or recurrence. The risks and benefits associated with the use of hormonal medications (i.e., birth control pills, hormone replacement therapy, infertility treatments, etc.) or pregnancy must be carefully reviewed in women who have been diagnosed with meningiomas.

Here are some initial suggestions that may help you make a decision about meningioma treatments, and take care of yourself during this challenging time:

Get information from sources you can trust. There are several charitable organizations that help people with brain tumors, plus their family members. A resource list is included at the end of this booklet.

Respect your feelings. If you are uncomfortable with any doctor or other health care provider, don’t be afraid to talk with another physician, therapist, etc. Making choices about brain tumor treatments is one of the most significant decisions that you will face, so it is especially important to feel comfortable with your medical team.

Get at least one “second opinion” about your treatment plans. Some people with meningiomas find that several doctors suggest the same treatment for their tumors, while others may encounter different suggestions from each person that they consult. Take advantage of the opportunity to get free or low cost opinions from brain tumor specialists at major medical centers.

Be an assertive medical consumer and don’t hesitate to ask questions. Your interest in learning more about any diagnosis, possible treatments, and related topics will not threaten a good doctor, nurse, or other health care provider. Encourage a family member or close friend to accompany you to medical appointments. This allows another person to discuss any information with you after the appointment is over.

Don’t be afraid to ask for help and support. Coping with a brain tumor can be a very challenging experience in many ways. This may involve dealing with physical symptoms, emotional stress, financial concerns, changes in family dynamics, and altered spiritual needs. Most friends and family members will want to be supportive of your needs. They will appreciate your letting them know how to be helpful. Specific requests for help (i.e., Please bring dinner for us on Tuesday; Can you drive me to the doctor’s office?) are especially helpful.

A meningioma is a type of tumor that develops from the meninges, the membrane that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. There are three layers of meninges: the dura mater, arachnoid, and pia mater. Most meningiomas are benign, but they can grow slowly and may sometimes cause symptoms. Treatment options include surgery, radiation, and observation. Meningiomas can occur in both men and women and can grow in different parts of the brain or spinal cord. They are often found in the central nervous system and are the most common primary brain tumors. The causes of meningiomas are not fully understood, but some factors may increase the risk. Meningiomas can be detected through imaging tests such as MRI or CT scans. If symptoms occur, treatment options include surgery, radiation, or observation. Follow-up care is important to monitor for recurrence or progression of the tumor.

Meningiomas appear to develop more frequently in women than in men. They can occur at any age but are most common in adults. Meningiomas are the most common primary brain tumors, accounting for about 26% of all primary brain tumors. They are found more frequently in women than in men. Meningiomas can develop anywhere in the central nervous system, including the brain and spinal cord. They are usually benign, but some can grow slowly and may require treatment.

The most common treatment for a meningioma is surgery, which involves removing the tumor. Radiation therapy may also be used, especially for malignant meningiomas. Observation may be recommended for asymptomatic meningiomas that are not growing. After treatment, follow-up imaging is necessary to monitor for recurrence.

In rare cases, meningiomas can recur after treatment. Recurrence may occur due to incomplete tumor resection or growth of new meningiomas. Recurrence can be managed with additional surgery, radiation, or observation. Patients with meningiomas should be monitored for recurrence and be prepared for treatment if it occurs.

The cause of meningiomas is not fully understood. However, previous exposure to ionizing radiation of the head and certain genetic factors may increase the risk of developing meningiomas. Neurofibromatosis type 2 is associated with multiple meningiomas, and genetic testing may be recommended for patients with a family history of meningiomas.

Meningiomas can cause symptoms such as headaches, seizures, or cognitive changes. However, many meningiomas are asymptomatic and are found incidentally during imaging tests. Early detection is important for successful treatment. Meningiomas are categorized as histologically benign, and their growth rate may vary. Some meningiomas grow slowly, while others may grow rapidly.

Meningiomas are diagnosed through imaging tests such as MRI or CT scans. Biopsy may be necessary to confirm the diagnosis. Malignant meningiomas are more likely to recur and may require more aggressive treatment. The choice of treatment depends on the location, size, and growth rate of the meningioma.

Meningiomas can be located in various parts of the central nervous system, including the brain and spinal cord. The symptoms and treatment options depend on the location of the meningioma. Meningiomas may cause headaches, seizures, or cognitive changes, but many are asymptomatic. Early detection and treatment are important to prevent recurrence.

In conclusion, meningiomas are a type of tumor that develops from the meninges, the membrane that surrounds the brain and spinal cord. They are the most common primary brain tumors, occurring more frequently in women than in men. Meningiomas can develop anywhere in the central nervous system, including the brain and spinal cord. They are usually benign, but some can grow slowly and may require treatment. The cause of meningiomas is not fully understood, but previous exposure to ionizing radiation of the head and certain genetic factors may increase the risk. Meningiomas can cause symptoms such as headaches, seizures, or cognitive changes. Early detection is important for successful treatment.
At any time of stress, the worst thing to do is to stop taking care of yourself. Coping with any type of brain tumor diagnosis is something most people never imagine having to do. Making choices about treatments that can have serious complications, and adjusting to a lifelong health concern requires time and energy. For most people, life after a meningioma diagnosis will be different, but it may also be filled with some unexpected benefits. Many brain tumor survivors report an increased awareness of the blessings in their daily lives, and a new sense of appreciation for their survival.

This information is intended to help you learn about your meningioma diagnosis and some treatment options, plus how to care for yourself throughout the experience. Please share this booklet with your family and friends to help them have a better understanding of your concerns.

About the authors

Nancy Conn-Levin, M.A. (health educator) and Lorraine Rubino-Levy, R.N., B.S.N. (registered nurse) are meningioma survivors who provide support and information to others affected by these tumors.

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For more information about brain tumors, contact these charitable organizations:

**American Brain Tumor Association**
2720 River Road
Des Plaines, IL 60018

Toll free: 800-886-2282
Voice: 847-827-9910
Fax: 847-827-9918
http://www.abta.org

**Brain Tumor Foundation of Canada**
620 Colborne Street, Suite 301
London, ON N6B 3R9
Canada

Voice: 519-642-7725
Fax: 519-642-7192
http://www.btfc.org

**The Brain Tumor Society**
124 Watertown Street, Suite 3-H
Watertown, MA 02472

Toll free: 800-770-8287
Voice: 617-924-9997
Fax: 617-924-9998
http://www.tbts.org

**Central Brain Tumor Registry of the U.S.**
Disclaimer

This booklet contains basic information about meningiomas and conventional treatment options, plus suggestions for self-care following a brain tumor diagnosis. It is not intended to be a substitute for medical care, or to be used as a way to diagnose or treat any medical problem.

If you or someone you know has symptoms that might indicate any illness, please contact a health care provider.

The telephone numbers and other contact information for organizations listed above may be subject to change.

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The Meningioma Project
Boston Neurosurgical Foundation
300 Longwood Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
http://www.boston-neurosurg.org

Online Support and Information

The Meningioma List is an online group provided by The Healing Exchange BRAIN TRUST, a charitable organization that helps people affected by brain tumors and related conditions. Hundreds of meningioma survivors and their family members exchange email messages through this group, sharing support and information with each other. There is no charge to subscribe and members can participate as much or as little as they choose. For more information about The Meningioma List or to subscribe, please send your name and the email address at which you would like to receive messages to:
nconnlevin@braintrust.org