

Diagnosing Brain Tumours - A Quick Guide



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This is a brief summary of the information on 'Diagnosing brain tumours' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

- Tests for brain tumours
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- Questions for your doctor about diagnosing brain tumours

Tests for brain tumours

Usually you begin by seeing your family doctor, who will examine you and ask you about your symptoms and general health.

Your doctor will ask you to have a physical examination, including a neurological examination. This will include looking into your eyes, testing your reflexes, testing your senses and coordination, and asking simple questions to test your memory. Your doctor may also want to examine your breasts, tummy (abdomen) or back passage (rectum). This is to make sure there are no obvious signs of cancer elsewhere in your body.

At the hospital

If you see a specialist you will be asked to have another physical and neurological examination. You may have blood tests to check your general state of health. Your specialist may want you to have an X-ray, a CT scan or an MRI scan. Before these scans you will usually have an injection of dye called 'contrast medium'. This circulates in the bloodstream to your brain and makes the picture of the brain clearer.

Further tests for brain tumours

If you have been diagnosed with a brain tumour, you may need further scans or tests to find out more about the tumour and help your doctor decide on the best treatment. The scans most often used are MRI, PET and SPECT scans. Other tests include

Surgical biopsy - The surgeon takes a small sample of the tumour to examine under a microscope.

Lumbar puncture - This test collects a sample of your cerebrospinal fluid. The doctor carefully pushes a needle into your spine and lets some fluid drip out through a small tube.



Myelogram and angiogram - A myelogram uses dye and X-rays to show how the fluid is circulating in your spinal cord. An angiogram is a similar test to look at the blood circulation in your brain.

Neuroendoscopy – You have this under general anaesthetic. The surgeon drills a hole in the skull and inserts a fine tube into the spaces in the brain called the ventricles. This can be done to relieve pressure or to take a biopsy or fluid sample.

After your tests

You will probably feel anxious while waiting for your test results. It may help to talk to a friend or relative about your feelings, or you may want contact a support group to talk to someone who has been through a similar experience.

Questions for your doctor about tests for brain tumours

- What tests are you going to do?
- What are you looking for?
- Will the tests show whether I have brain tumour?
- Will the tests show if the brain tumour is benign or malignant?
- Will the tests show whether my brain tumour can be removed?
- Are any of the tests painful?
- Do any of the tests have after effects?
- Can I have these tests as an outpatient?
- Should I bring someone with me when I have the tests?
- How long will the results take?
- Who will give me the test results?

- Will you need to discuss the results with colleagues to help decide the best treatment for me?
- Will you talk to the cancer (oncology) team about my case before I have an operation?

More information

For more information about brain tumours, visit our website <http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on **0808 800 4040** 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday

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