

[Craniopharyngioma - Childhood - Introduction](#) [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 05/2016

ON THIS PAGE: You will find some basic information about this disease and the parts of the body it may affect. This is the first page of Cancer.Net's Guide to Childhood Craniopharyngioma. To see other pages, use the menu. Think of that menu as a roadmap to this full guide.

Craniopharyngioma is a type of [central nervous system \(CNS\) tumor](#) [3]. A tumor can be cancerous or benign. A cancerous tumor is malignant, meaning it is usually fast-growing and can spread to other parts of the body. A benign tumor means the tumor is usually slower-growing but will not spread. Craniopharyngioma is a benign tumor that is usually slow-growing and very unlikely to spread.

About the central nervous system

The brain and spinal cord make up the CNS, where all vital functions of the body are controlled. The brain is the center of thought, memory, and emotion. It controls the 5 senses, which include smell, touch, taste, hearing, and sight. It also controls movement and other basic body functions, including consciousness, heartbeat, circulation, and breathing. The spinal cord is made up of nerves that carry information from the body to the brain and from the brain to the body.

Craniopharyngioma usually starts near the pituitary gland in a part of the brain called the suprasellar region. This region is the area of the brain just above the sella. The sella is the part of the skull where the pituitary gland is located. The pituitary gland is an important gland in the brain and is often called the "master endocrine gland" because it produces several different hormones that affect how the body functions. The optic nerves and a gland called the hypothalamus are located above the sella. The hypothalamus controls hunger, body

temperature, thirst, sleep, fatigue, and other behaviors.

About craniopharyngioma

Craniopharyngioma is a slow-growing tumor that can grow for many years before it is found. It can be solid and/or cystic. A cystic tumor has a closed pouch or sac that contains fluid made by the tumor. The solid part often contains areas of calcium that can easily be seen on a CT scan. The cystic part of the tumor often contains very high amounts of protein.

This section covers craniopharyngioma that occurs in children. For information about craniopharyngioma in adults, read the [guide to brain tumors](#) [4].

Looking for More of an Introduction?

If you would like more of an introduction, explore these related items. Please note these links will take you to other sections on Cancer.Net:

- **ASCO Answers Fact Sheet:** [Read a 1-page fact sheet](#) [5] that offers an introduction to CNS tumors in children. This fact sheet is available as a PDF, so it is easy to print out.
- **Cancer.Net Patient Education Videos:** View short videos led by ASCO experts in [childhood tumors and cancers](#) [6] and [brain tumors](#) [7] that provide basic information and areas of research.

The [next section in this guide is Statistics](#) [8]. It helps explain how many children are diagnosed with this disease and general survival rates. Or, use the menu to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/craniopharyngioma-childhood/introduction>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31323>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31327>

[5] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/asco_answers_cns_childhood.pdf

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/27386>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/27391>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18717>