

## **Craniopharyngioma - Childhood - Overview** [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 04/2014

**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 on the side of your screen. 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 will not spread, and it is usually slower-growing. 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 five 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. When a tumor grows in the CNS, it can affect a person's thought processes and/or movements. A tumor in the CNS can sometimes be difficult to treat because the tissue around the tumor may be vital to the body's functioning. However, treatment for craniopharyngioma has a high rate of success.

Craniopharyngioma 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 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.

### **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, which means the 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 Overview?

If you would like additional introductory information, explore these related items. Please note these links take you to other sections on Cancer.Net:

- [ASCO Answers Fact Sheet](#) [5]: Read a one-page fact sheet (available as a PDF) that offers an easy-to-print introduction to CNS tumors in children.
- 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.

*To continue reading this guide, use the menu on the side of your screen to select another section.*

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#### Links:

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

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18660>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18562>

[5] [http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/asco\\_answers\\_cns\\_childhood.pdf](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>