

## **Pituitary Gland Tumor - Symptoms and Signs** [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 09/2013

**ON THIS PAGE:** You will find out more about body changes and other things that can signal a problem that may need medical care. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

People with a pituitary gland tumor may experience the following symptoms or signs. Sometimes, people with a pituitary gland tumor do not show any of these symptoms. Or, these symptoms may be caused by a medical condition that is not related to a pituitary gland tumor. If you are concerned about a symptom or sign on this list, please talk with your doctor. General symptoms may include:

- Headaches
- Vision problems
- Changes in menstrual cycles in women
- Impotence (the inability to achieve or maintain an erection) in men, caused by hormone changes
- Infertility (the inability to have children)
- Inappropriate production of breast milk
- Cushing's syndrome (a combination of weight gain, high blood pressure, diabetes, and easy bruising), caused by overproduction of ACTH
- Acromegaly (enlargement of the extremities or limbs and thickening of the skull and jaw), from too much growth hormone
- Unexplained tiredness
- Mood changes
- Irritability

A pituitary tumor causes symptoms in three different ways, which are discussed below:

- **By producing too much of one or more hormones.**

**Growth hormone.** The symptoms depend on a patient's age. In children, before the bone plates have closed, increased growth can cause gigantism (excessive body size and height). In adults, increased growth hormone causes acromegaly, a syndrome that includes excessive growth of soft tissues and bones, high blood sugar, high blood pressure, heart disease, sleep apnea, increased snoring, carpal tunnel syndrome, and pain (including headaches).

**Thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH).** Too much TSH causes increased production of thyroid hormone, leading to nervousness and irritability, fast heart rate and high blood pressure, heart disease, increased sweating, thin skin, and weight loss.

**Prolactin.** Too much prolactin causes inappropriate secretion of breast milk (even in men), osteoporosis (bone weakening), loss of sex drive, infertility, irregular menstrual cycles, and impotence.

**Adrenocorticotrophic hormone.** Too much of this hormone causes weight gain (particularly in the body's trunk, not the legs or arms), high blood pressure, high blood sugar, brittle bones, emotional changes, stretch marks on the skin, easy bruising.

**Gonadotropins (FSH and LH).** These are usually not high enough to cause symptoms but can rarely cause infertility and irregular menstrual cycles in women.

- **By pressing on the pituitary gland, causing it to make too little of one or more hormones.**

**Growth hormone.** Not enough growth hormone causes late growth in children, poor muscle strength, irritability, weakening of bone strength, and overall unwell feeling.

**TSH.** Low TSH causes fatigue, low energy, sensitivity to cold temperatures, constipation, and weight gain.

**Prolactin.** Too little prolactin causes inability to breastfeed after a woman gives birth to a baby.

**Adrenocorticotrophic hormone.** Too little of this hormone causes fatigue and low energy, low blood pressure, low blood sugar, and upset stomach.

**Gonadotropins (FSH and LH).** Low levels of gonadotropins cause infertility, decrease in sex drive, impotence, and irregular menstrual cycles.

- **By pressing on the optic (eye) nerves or (less commonly) the nerves controlling eye movements, and causing either loss of part or all of a person's sight, or double vision.**

Your doctor will ask you questions about the symptoms you are experiencing to help find out the cause of the problem, called a diagnosis [3]. This may include how long you've been experiencing the symptom(s) and how often.

If a tumor is diagnosed, relieving symptoms and side effects remains an important part of care and treatment. This may also be called symptom management, palliative care, or supportive care. Be sure to talk with your health care team about symptoms you experience, including any

new symptoms or a change in symptoms.

*The next section helps explain what tests and scans may be needed to learn more about the cause of the symptoms. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select **Diagnosis**, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.*

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**Links:**

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/pituitary-gland-tumor/symptoms-and-signs>

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19540>