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ON THIS PAGE: You will learn about how doctors usually describe a tumor's growth or spread, called the stage, and how this differs for a pituitary gland tumor. To see other pages, use the menu.

Staging is a way of describing where a tumor is located, if or where it has spread, and whether it is affecting other parts of the body. Doctors use diagnostic tests to find out the tumor's stage, so staging may not be complete until all of the tests are finished.

Knowing the stage helps the doctor to decide what kind of treatment is best and can help predict a patient's prognosis, which is the chance of recovery. There are different stage descriptions for different types of tumors. Unlike other types of tumors, pituitary tumors that are malignant or noncancerous are not staged and are measured differently by the doctor.

Because a pituitary gland tumor is most commonly noncancerous and called a pituitary adenoma, it is usually classified according to its size on an MRI. This imaging test is described in the [Diagnosis](#) [3] section.

- A microadenoma is small, meaning its 10 millimeters [mm] or less.
- A macroadenoma is larger and can extend outside the sella turcica, the bony structure around the pituitary gland. A macroadenoma is larger than 10 mm at its widest point.

Other factors considered when classifying a pituitary gland tumor include whether the tumor is

functional, meaning, what, if any, hormone(s) it makes, and whether it has grown into nearby structures.

The structure the tumor most commonly grows into is the cavernous sinus. This area near the pituitary gland contains the carotid artery and several important nerves that control eye movement.

Information about the tumor's stage will help the doctor recommend a specific treatment plan. The [next section in this guide is Treatment Options](#) [4]. Or, use the menu to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

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

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

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

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/19542>