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Pituitary Gland Tumor - Coping with Side Effects [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 steps to take to help cope with physical, social, and emotional side effects. This page includes several links outside of this guide to other sections of this website. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

Fear of treatment side effects [3] is common after a diagnosis of a tumor, but it may help to know that preventing and controlling side effects is a major focus of your health care team. This is called palliative or supportive care, and it is an important part of the overall treatment plan, regardless of the stage of disease.

Common side effects from each treatment option for a pituitary gland tumor are described in detail within the Treatment [4] section. Learn more about the most common side effects of a tumor and different treatments, along with ways to prevent or control them [5]. Side effects depend on a variety of factors, including the tumor?s stage, the length and dosage of treatment(s), and your overall health.

Specifically, treatment of a pituitary gland tumor can cause:

- **Fatigue** [6]**.** Fatigue is extreme exhaustion or tiredness, and it is the most common problem that people with pituitary tumors experience. Patients who feel fatigue often say that even a small effort, such as walking across a room, can seem like too much. A pituitary gland tumor may cause fatigue if it lowers levels of cortisol, thyroid hormone, or growth hormone. High levels of cortisol can weaken muscles, which may also cause fatigue.

- **Gastrointestinal upset.** Patients being treated for a prolactin-secreting pituitary tumor (prolactinoma) with such medicines as bromocriptine or cabergoline may have gastrointestinal upset, and it may sometimes limit the patient?s ability to take a particular medication.

- **Gallstones.** People being treated for too much growth hormone may develop gallstones (rock-like formations of cholesterol and bile salts in the gallbladder or bile duct); therefore, people receiving this treatment must be monitored for gallstones throughout the treatment.

Before treatment begins, talk with your doctor about possible side effects of each type of treatment you will be receiving. Ask which side effects are most likely to happen, when they are

likely to occur, and what can be done to prevent or relieve them. And, ask about the level of caregiving you may need during treatment and recovery, as family members and friends often play an important role in the care of a person with a pituitary gland tumor. Learn more about caregiving [7].

In addition to physical side effects, there may be psychosocial (emotional and social) effects as well. Patients and their families are encouraged to share their feelings with a member of their health care team who can help with coping strategies [8]. Learn more about the importance of addressing such needs [9], including concerns about managing the cost of your medical care [10] .

During and after treatment, be sure to tell the health care team about the side effects you experience, even if you feel they are not serious. Sometimes, side effects can last beyond the treatment period, called a long-term side effect. A side effect that occurs months or years after treatment is called a late effect [11]. Treatment of both types of effects is an important part of survivorship care. Learn more by reading the After Treatment [12] section or talking with your doctor.

The next section helps explain medical tests and check-ups needed after finishing cancer treatment. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select After Treatment, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/pituitary-gland-tumor/coping-side-effects
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/24492
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/19542
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/25238
[6] http://www.cancer.net/node/25048
[7] http://www.cancer.net/node/25009
[8] http://www.cancer.net/node/21
[9] http://www.cancer.net/node/25010
[10] http://www.cancer.net/node/24865
[11] http://www.cancer.net/survivorship/late-effects
[12] http://www.cancer.net/node/19545