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Pituitary Gland Tumor - After Treatment [1]

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

ON THIS PAGE: You will read about your medical care after treatment is finished and why this follow-up care is important. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

After treatment for a pituitary gland tumor ends, talk with your doctor about developing a follow-up care plan. This plan may include regular physical examinations and/or medical tests to monitor your recovery for the coming months and years. Once surgery to remove a pituitary gland tumor is done, the patient is usually monitored by both an endocrinologist and a neurosurgeon. Follow-up care for a pituitary gland tumor may include regular tests to measure hormone levels and MRI scans (usually done yearly) to learn how well treatment worked. Talk with your doctor about any new symptoms you experience.

During treatment, patients with pituitary tumors may experience a number of symptoms that may affect the ability to function fully and conduct a normal life; however after treatment, most people can lead full and active lives. Patients with impaired vision may need special accommodation after treatment. Studies show that people with Cushing's disease are most affected after treatment, mostly because they are also most affected before treatment, meaning recovery often takes longer. Some people with too much prolactin (a hormone that stimulates lactation and the secretion of progesterone) or growth hormone may also be significantly affected.

Radiation therapy can have late effects, in particular decreasing hormone production from the pituitary gland. These can take five to seven years to develop, but they do not occur in all patients. Talk with your doctor about the symptoms or signs to watch for during the recovery period.

As most pituitary tumors are noncancerous, these tumors do not usually spread to other parts of the body. However, patients may be at risk for developing other types of cancer. For example, patients with too much growth hormone have a higher risk of developing colon cancer [3] or thyroid cancer [4], but only if the tumor was not completely removed during surgery and growth hormone levels are still high. People with MEN1 syndrome [5] or Carney complex [6] need regular screening (see Treatment [7] Options) for the other tumors associated with that condition, but most people treated for a pituitary tumor need regular follow-up tests to make sure that the tumor has not come back. ASCO offers treatment summary forms [8] to help keep track of the treatment you received and develop a survivorship care plan once treatment is completed.

People recovering from a pituitary gland tumor are encouraged to follow established guidelines for good health, such as maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, eating a balanced diet, and having recommended cancer screening tests. Talk with your doctor to develop a plan that is best for your needs. Moderate physical activity can help you rebuild your strength and energy level. Your doctor can help you create an appropriate exercise plan based on your needs, physical abilities, and fitness level. Learn more about the next steps to take in survivorship [9], including making positive lifestyle changes [10].

The next section offers a list of questions you may want to ask. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select Questions to Ask the Doctor, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/pituitary-gland-tumor/after-treatment
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/18701
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/19293
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/19366
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