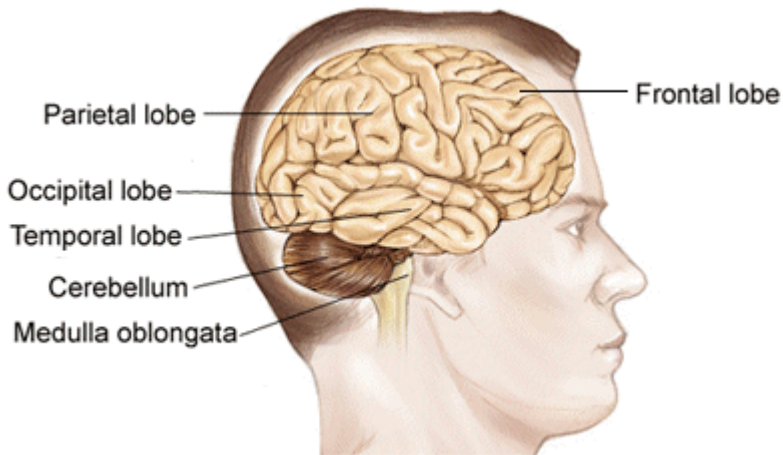


Brain Tumor Information

Brain tumors are divided into two types: those that originate in the brain (called primary brain tumors, e.g. glioma or meningioma) and tumors that originated elsewhere in the body (e.g. lung cancer, breast, melanoma or kidney) that have spread to the brain (brain metastases.)

The symptoms of a brain tumor depend on the location in the brain and the size of the tumor. Some patients have significant symptoms (headache, seizures, weakness, confusion) and some patients have no symptoms.

Some patients are on medication to relieve symptoms, e.g. Decadron (to prevent brain swelling) or Dilantin (to prevent seizures.)



Brain radiation is usually given 5 days a week and the radiation field (area treated) may be focused on a small region (e.g. Gamma Knife) or may need to include the whole brain (which may cause more side effects.)

Short term side effects: many people notice more fatigue or slight confusion during radiation. Headaches are uncommon and may indicate a need to increase the dose of Decadron. Hair loss usually takes 10 to 14 days to develop. A mild sunburn effect on the skin of the scalp may occur. Some people notice some dryness of the eyes and slight hearing loss (fullness in the ears.)

Long term side effects: the skin reaction fades away in 1- 2 weeks, hair regrowth is variable and depends on the dose of radiation (3000 cGy will usually grow back, but over 5000cGy may not.) A few people have persistent hearing problems and need to have an ENT doctor remove fluid that collects behind the eardrums. There is some concern that high doses of whole brain radiation may affect long-term memory. Follow up MRI's are useful to look for recurrent tumor or signs of radiation reaction.

The prognosis (outcome) of patients with brain tumors obviously depends on multiple, complicated variables and patients should discuss this with their doctor. Similarly the likelihood of response or benefit from radiation treatments is quite complicated

For more information go to web sites: www.aboutcancer.com or www.wellspringoncology.org