Wilms' Tumor

Wilms' tumor is the most common *tumor* (lump) of the kidney in children. Usually it is found by age five. Some times it is associated with a number of other abnormalities that are found at birth.

SYMPTOMS

These tumors of the kidney are found as a *mass* (enlargement) in the *abdomen* (belly). This is sometimes found by parents by accident or during a routine physical exam. Sometimes it is found because of a fever, elevated blood pressure, or because of blood in the urine.

DIAGNOSIS

This tumor is diagnosed with routine studies including *ultrasound* (sound waves are bounced off the kidneys to produce a picture), routine x-rays, *intravenous pyelograms* (a dye is given that is passed by the kidneys and allows a specialized x-ray to be taken), and CT scans. This allow your caregiver to look for other abnormalities. The earlier the stage of the tumor the more *benign* (non-cancerous) it appears under the microscope, the better the outcome will be. This means there is a better chance of survival.

TREATMENT

Surgery is the main form of treatment. Surgery is done right after the tumor is first diagnosed. Sometimes it follows a course of medications (*chemotherapy*) to fight the tumor. Radiation may also be used following surgery. Because the treatment varies with the type of problems present and the extent of the disease, your caregiver will discuss all of your options with you. Together you can make a decision about the best treatment of this disease. Sometimes some of the decisions must be made after a course of treatment. An entire kidney and the surrounding tissue may be removed. Sometimes a portion of the kidney on the other side may need to be removed. This is something your caregiver will discuss with you.

All tumors are frightening. Just the mention of the word brings fear to us when we first hear it. But, with knowing as much as you can about an illness, you will be better able to cope and have the tools to best know how to handle problems as they arise. Your caregiver will help keep you informed and educated about the problems and help you decide how to handle them.

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