Cerebral Atrophy

Cerebral atrophy is a condition characterized by a decrease in the size, or a wasting away of, brain cells and tissues. Cerebral atrophy may be a part of numerous disorders. It may affect the entire brain, or only a portion of it.

CAUSES

Causes may include:

- Malnutrition.
- Abnormal cell or hormonal changes.
- Stroke.

SYMPTOMS

Problems (*symptoms*) include:

- Muscle weakness.
- Vision or speech impairments.
- Dementia.

DIAGNOSIS

Neuroimaging techniques are used to diagnose the disorder. They include:

- MRI (*magnetic resonance imaging*).
- CT (*computerized tomography*).
- PET (*positron emission tomography*).
- SPECT (*single-photon emission computed tomography*).

TREATMENT

Generally, treatment is symptomatic and supportive. It depends upon the specific disorder that caused the cerebral atrophy. In some cases, drug therapy may relieve some symptoms.

The prognosis for individuals with the disorder varies. Progressive cerebral atrophy is fatal because the atrophy spreads to all parts of the brain. Cerebral atrophy that is limited to a specific area of the brain affects normal functioning but is not necessarily fatal.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

Information provided by The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

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