Neuroblastoma

The neuroblastoma is a common *malignant* (cancerous, not benign) *tumor* (abnormal growths) of infancy. It most commonly shows up as a *mass* (a lump or growth that can be felt) in the *abdomen* (belly). It is responsible for about 15% of cancer deaths in children. When your caregiver can feel these growths in the abdomen, he or she will perform additional testing. These tests help the caregiver figure out what the growth is. These tests also help the caregiver figure out the best way to treat it.

SYMPTOMS

The patients usually have a mass in the abdomen. This illness may also cause fluid *accumulation* (build-up) in the abdomen (known as *ascites*). This causes the abdomen to become *distended* (swollen). *Metastasis* (tumor spread) to bone and *marrow* (the centers of the bone that produce blood cells) may cause bone pain. It may spread to the chest causing pain there. Spreading to the eye sockets can produce changes in the eyes. This can cause difficulty with normal eye movement.

TREATMENT

Total *excision* (removal) of this tumor is the best possible treatment, if the tumor is in an early stage or easy to find location. Total removal is the best hope for a cure and may be the only treatment required. Removal of the tumor may not be possible if the tumor has already spread to other locations. Radiation and chemotherapy are other methods of treatment that can help the problem, but do not cure it.

PROGNOSIS

Researchers have not made many useful changes in the treatment and are always working on new treatments. The survival rate has not changed much over the past thirty years.

All tumors are frightening. Just the mention of the word brings fear. Knowing as much as you can about an illness will help you cope. Having information will help you know how to handle problems as they arise. Your caregiver will help keep you informed and educated about the problems. Your caregiver will also help you decide how to handle the problems.

Document Released: 04/01/2002 Document Re-Released: 03/16/2010
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