



Brain Tumor Diagnosis and Surgery Tips

So you were diagnosed with a brain tumor, now what? There are many variables to consider with tumors; your job is to work hard to be well. This information is meant to serve as a simple user friendly guide, offering tips and tricks along the way. This is not medical advice, but knowledge collected over the years that you may find helpful.



1: Know your formal diagnosis!

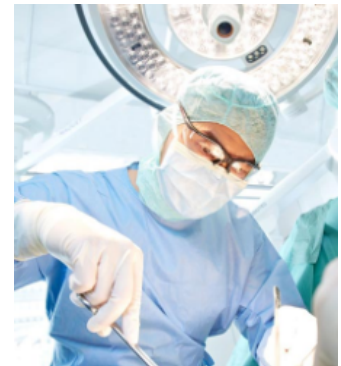
Research and inquire as much as possible about your diagnosis. Strive to know the following:

- What type of tumor
- Size of tumor
- Location in brain
- Severity of diagnosis
- Follow-up care required
- Surgery/ radiation/ procedure/ plan

2: Find a neurosurgeon you're confident in!

The most important step in planning for brain surgery is finding a neurosurgeon that makes you feel comfortable. It helps to have confidence in their ability to do this procedure successfully. If you have time to plan for brain surgery follow these tips:

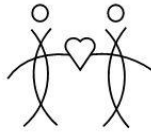
- Ask your medical provider for trusted neurosurgeon referrals.
- Join an online group with members who have this condition and ask for recommendations (Facebook is a good start).
- Research online for the top neurosurgeons in your area. If willing to travel, search for top ranked neurosurgeons in the country. Read about their area of expertise and affiliations, see how long they have practiced, what schools they attended, and review the quality of the facility in which they work.
- Always read their reviews. You want someone highly respected in this field.
- Schedule an appointment with at least 2 doctors, preferably 3 or 4 of them. This person will do surgery on your brain, it's good to have options!
- If the doctor has a long wait list, schedule the 1st available appointment and call the office a few times a week to ask for any cancellations. Quite often you can get in sooner as cancellations are very common.



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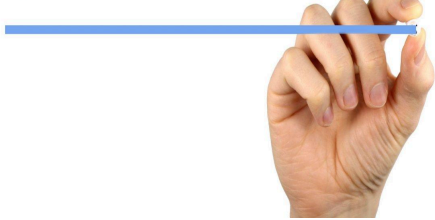
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APPOINTMENT



3. What to ask at your appointment!

Take a notebook and have a list of questions ready to go. A good neurosurgeon will be sympathetic to your concerns and will take the time to sit with you to address your questions and fears. Tips on things that are good to ask:

- What is the doctor's plan of action for removal or treatment? What does that look like? How much hair shaving will take place? How large will the incision be and will staples, stitches, or glue be used for closure? Is radiation needed?
- What is the timeline in which to schedule the surgery?
- What are the risk-factors? Can you do things to help lessen those risk factors?
- What's the estimated recovery time and return to work time-frame?
- When can you drive, exercise, be intimate, left alone, etc.?
- What medications will you need post surgery/ for how long? Any side-effects?
- What's the aftercare plan? Follow-up appointments, MRI's, therapy, etc?
- Overall risk versus benefit? If you do/don't have surgery what can happen?
- How long will the surgery be? How many nights might you be in the hospital?
- What's the doctor's professional opinion for the best/worst case scenario?
- Does the doctor appear to have a skilled and reliable team around him?
- Why did Dr. _____ become a brain surgeon?
- Does your insurance cover this doctor/ facility? If not, how much will it cost?

4. Share the news with your family and friends

You may have already done this but if not it's time to do so. You might think keeping this to yourself is the better choice but as your diagnosis progresses, you are likely going to need help and support. At this point you understand your diagnosis and can share your plan of action with your loved ones. Don't worry about how they will handle the news. What is important is how you handle it, and if you are reading this guide you already took an important first step.



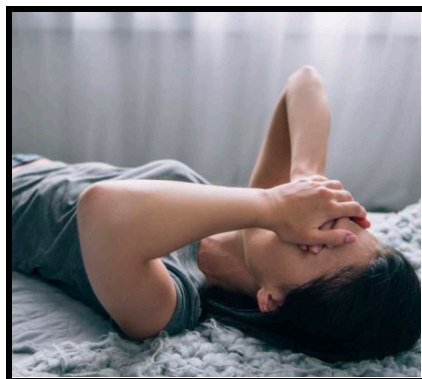
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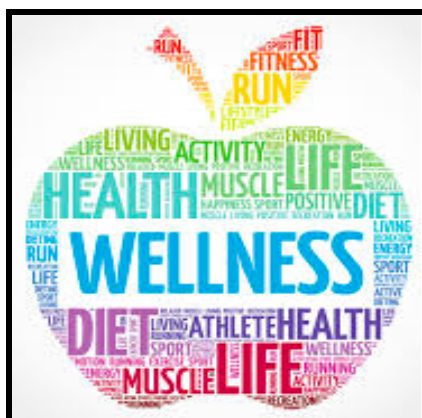
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Feel all the feels: The brain tumor club is not one anyone wants to join but if you are reading this then you have arrived at this journey. You will likely be shocked, confused, mad, and maybe even question if you did anything to contribute to this. It's best to not overthink it but simply to feel all the feels. Cry, laugh, write in a journal, seek therapy... whatever you do feel it! Denying your fear, anxiety, concern, or upset will only make things more difficult. Expressing emotions is good.



Aspire to be well: It's time to fight for your wellness. Maybe you have symptoms and maybe you don't. Either way, once diagnosed you now have a medical condition to manage and your goal is to prevent it from getting worse. Focus on taking care of you every day. Plan for regular medical follow-ups, fit in some wellness things like exercise, quality nutrition, talk therapy, or [support groups](#). Prioritize your efforts towards wellness to help manage the diagnosis pre and post surgery or radiation.

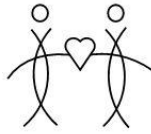


Schedule ME Time! You have a brain tumor and it's time to be a little selfish. Gather the support you need from family and friends so that you can schedule some quality "ME" time. Get a haircut, take yourself to lunch, enjoy a massage, visit with a friend, watch your favorite movie, or read a book. Whatever is most enjoyable for you, carve out time to do the things you love that fill you with joy. You will be glad you did!

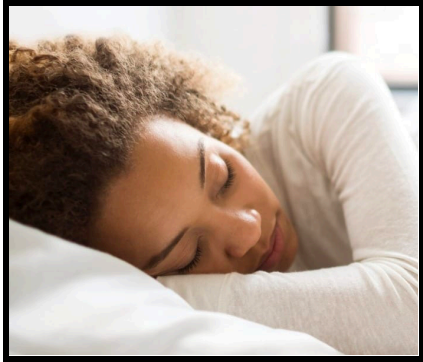
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Sleep: Quality sleep and consistent rest time is so important especially post brain surgery. Fatigue is a real thing, no sense in fighting it, accept it! Consider waking up at the same time every day regardless of when you fall asleep. This will help you create a reliable sleep pattern. Sleep hours are best at night between the hours of 9pm-6am when the dark hours are present. As often recommended, 7-8 hours is best!



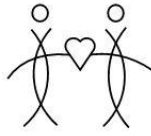
Exercise: This is sometimes not a preference for people but it is a beneficial thing worth doing. Don't overcomplicate it and start with exercises or routines that are doable for you. A walk a few days a week, some lightweight training 2-3 days a week, and 1-2 brief high-intensity cardio sessions are all good for you. Exercise is not a one-size-fits-all, so do that which works in your daily life and make an effort to move and build muscle.



Engage in Talk Therapy/Support Groups: Whether you do this one-on-one with a professional or in a [support peer group](#) setting, talking through things can be very beneficial. Allow for an outsider(s) to hear what's going on in your world and offer you support. These platforms help people to see things from a different point of view all while offering guidance, knowledge, and understanding to one another.

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Spread and receive LOVE: Nothing like a brain tumor diagnosis to remind you of the importance of appreciating life and remaining present in the moment. Be kind and love yourself always, even on your darkest days. Tell those you love and appreciate that you are grateful they are there to support you. Some people who you expect to show up for you may not, your diagnosis will affect others too, this is only natural. Spend time with those you love most, doing the things that matter most to you.

If you are struggling and find you need additional support, consider these resources:

- Your primary care physician may be able to help guide you, offer medications that can calm you, possibly refer you to a good talk therapist, or a social worker.
- Facebook groups. There are many and they are wonderful.
- Find a companion who relates. If you are unable to connect with someone who understands, reach out to [Brain Tumor | Meningioma Companion](#) and schedule a time to get the help and support you need.
- Join a Brain Tumor Support Group. Meet others on this journey and do it all from the comfort of your home. [Click here](#) for more details.

Final Note: Our BTCompanion community compiled a list of must-have comfort items on [Amazon](#). These are particularly good to order before surgery or radiation treatment. Many of these items are good day-to-day for symptoms that may linger like headaches, nausea, pain, light and noise sensitivity, etc.

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