



BRAIN OR EPIDURAL ABSCESS



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A collection of pus caused by a bacterial infection in the brain. The infection can also be in the membranes that cover the brain and spinal cord. They can affect people at any age and are more common in men than in women.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

The following symptoms usually appear gradually over several hours. They resemble symptoms of a brain tumor or stroke:

- Headache, usually severe.
- Fever.
- Stiff neck.
- Confusion or delirium.
- Seizures (convulsions).
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Pain in the back. It may occur if the infection is in the covering of the spinal cord.
- One side of the body may feel numb or weak. The body may be paralyzed on one side.
- Unable to walk normally.
- Trouble speaking.

CAUSES

- An infection that spreads from another part of the head, such as sinusitis or a middle ear infection.
- An infection due to a head injury or surgery.
- An infection that spreads through the blood from other infected organs. This includes the lungs, skin, heart valves, or dental infections.
- Infections, such as fungal or protozoan, that occur in people with weak immune systems.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Head injury.
- Chronic illness, such as diabetes.
- Recent infection, especially in ears, nose, eyes, or face.
- Weak immune system due to illness or drugs.
- Drug abuse.
- Tongue piercing.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- None specific. To reduce risk factors:

Seek medical care for infections.

Wear protective headgear when you are involved in any activity that could lead to a head injury.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Can usually be cured with early diagnosis and treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Seizures, coma, and death (without treatment).
- Rupture of the abscess.
- Brain hemorrhage.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Emergency hospital care is needed.
- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms and activities. Medical tests may include blood tests, CT, and MRI.
- Medical or surgical treatment will depend on the location of the infection. Usually, surgery is needed to drain the infected area. Drugs will be given for the infection.
- Breathing support with a machine (ventilator) may be needed, along with other supportive-care measures. Fluids may be given through a vein (IV).

MEDICATIONS

- Antibiotic drugs will be given for the infection. They may be continued for several weeks.
- Drugs to prevent seizures may be prescribed.
- Following surgery, you may be given drugs to reduce swelling.

ACTIVITY

While in the hospital, you will need bed rest. After a 2 to 3 week recovery, you should be as active as your strength and feeling of well-being allow.

DIET

While you are in the hospital, fluids may be given intravenously. Following treatment, eat a normal, well-balanced diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has any symptoms of a brain abscess.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

