

Frequently Asked Questions about Making the Diagnosis of Astrocytoma

*Presented by Peter C. Burger, MD
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
December 2006*

1. Why my child?
2. Did I/we do something to make this happen?
3. What kind of tumor is it and how is this determined? (classification, grading, staging)
4. Is the diagnosis based on a pathologist's study of tissue in all cases?
5. Where do brain and spinal cord tumors come from?
6. What is a "glioma"?
7. What is an "astrocytoma"?
8. What is a "brain stem glioma"?
9. What is a "JPA"?
10. What is an "optic nerve glioma"?
11. What is a "pilomyxoid astrocytoma"?
12. What is a "PXA"?
13. What is a "ganglion cell tumor" (gangliocytoma, ganglioglioma)?
14. What is a "craniopharyngioma"?
15. What is a "PNET"?

16. What is a “medulloblastoma”?
17. What is an “ependymoma”?
18. Is it “benign” or “malignant”?
19. What does “grade I” mean? “Grade IV”?
20. What is a “low grade tumor” and how does it differ from a “high grade” tumor?
21. How do “benign” and “malignant” differ from “low grade” and “high grade”?
23. What are “low grade gliomas” and “high grade gliomas”?
22. Can a “benign” or low grade tumor become “malignant” or high grade?
24. What does “anaplastic” mean? (e.g. anaplastic ependymoma)
25. Do tumors spread?
26. How is the possibility of spread evaluated?
27. Why are they suggesting chemo-and/or radiotherapy for a “benign” tumor?
29. Why are some “malignant tumors” cured and some “benign tumors” are not?
38. On what does the prognosis depend (extent of resection, growth rate of residual tumor, and sensitivity of residual tumor to treatments)
29. How is the extent of tumor removal determined?
30. What happens if all of the tumor is not removed?
31. Why are there different pathological diagnoses of my child’s tumor at different institutions?
32. What do I do if there are?
33. How do I get a second opinion about the pathology of my child’s tumor?