

PATIENT GUIDE TO TUMORS OF THE SPINE

DESCRIPTION

Tumors of the spine are usually metastatic, meaning they originate from a primary tumor elsewhere in the body and spread to the spine via the lymph nodes or bloodstream. Tumors can grow into the spinal cord causing neurological problems. In addition, tumors may destroy vertebral bodies causing collapse and thus, local or radiating pain.

SYMPTOMS

Back pain caused by destroyed bone. The hallmark of this type of back pain is non-mechanical in nature, meaning to say it occurs at rest

Radiating leg pain or weakness.

Neurological problems, the most urgent of which is bladder and bowel function disturbances

CAUSES

Growth of a primary tumor in a vertebral body.

Spread of distant primary organ tumors to the spine.

Growth of tumors into spinal canal.

POSSIBLE TREATMENT OPTIONS

Non Operative Treatment

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy are commonly needed. Surgery can be considered for those who do not improve.

Anterior Vertebral Body Replacement

Surgical instruments are used to remove tumor and affected vertebrae. Once the tumor is removed, a metal implant is inserted to help provide stability and replace the void caused by the removed tumor.

Laminectomy and Instrumentation Stabilisation

Performed when a tumor has spread to the spine and is pushing on the spinal cord. The laminectomy removes a portion of the bone pushing on the nerves or spinal cord causing pain. Instrumentation is often used to help provide additional stability. Surgery is aimed at improving the quality of life of the patient. Usually post-operative chemotherapy or radiotherapy is required.