



Symptom Management: Secondary Cancer (metastasis) in the Brain

Lung cancer can spread to the brain (brain metastasis) and can potentially cause a variety of symptoms. You will need advice on how to manage these if they occur. The signs and symptoms that cancer may have gone to the brain include;

- Limb weakness
- Confusion
- Speech disturbance
- Behavioural change
- Headaches
- Eye sight disturbance
- Epileptic fit

These symptoms can potentially be reversed and you will need urgent advice if any of the above happen.

Management

Treatments for brain metastasis include steroids, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, targeted agents and surgery.

The most common treatment is with a steroid called dexamethasone. Dexamethasone works by reducing the swelling in the brain which in turn helps to reverse any symptoms. The drug is started at a high dose and is lowered over the next few weeks to prevent unnecessary side effects from the drug. You should discuss the dosing schedule with your doctor or lung cancer nurse specialist. If you have had a fit, again the dose or type of your medication may need to be altered. You will need to seek urgent advice from your doctor or lung cancer nurse specialist.

One of the most important things to remember is that you are not allowed to drive your car. You need to be extra careful with your activities such as swimming or

Source: National Lung Cancer Forum For Nurses

operating other machinery which may put you at risk. You will need to discuss this further with your doctor or lung cancer nurse specialist.

If lung cancer has spread to the brain your oncologist or lung cancer nurse specialist will be able to discuss with you the potential treatment options mentioned above.