

Chordoma

Information for patients



What is chordoma?

Chordomas are very rare, slow growing types of cancer that invade bone and soft tissues surrounding the spinal column (the vertebrae). Chordomas are found most commonly in the bottom of the spine or at the base of the skull.

Chordomas most commonly occur in people between 40 and 60 years of age, more often in men than in women. There are around 20 diagnosed cases in the UK each year.

Diagnosis

We will confirm your diagnosis after we have carried out X-rays and MRI scans (imaging) and we have histology (results) from the biopsy taken from the tumour tissue. Chordomas are also 'graded' depending on how fast they are growing and how likely they are to spread to other places in the body.

Chordomas rarely spread, but as with all cancers it is important that we check to see whether the cancer has spread (metastasised) to other sites in the body such as the lungs, liver, bone and skin. We will do this by taking Bone, CT or PET CT scans before we start your treatment.

Treatment options

Treatment options will depend on a number of factors, such as:

- the position, size and grade of the tumour
- whether it has spread anywhere else
- your general health.

The main treatment we use is surgery to remove the tumour. We may give you radiotherapy after surgery as this may help to lower the risk of the chordoma developing again. We might also give you radiotherapy if we are unable to fully remove all of the tumour.

Treating chordomas with chemotherapy is less effective than for other cancers, although chemotherapy can help if your tumour returns.

In some situations, surgery to remove a chordoma of the spine may affect how your bowel and bladder work. This may mean that you might need a colostomy or urostomy. We will talk with you about this if we feel it may be a risk.

After your treatment has finished, your doctors will want you to come back to hospital regularly for follow up scans and to see how you are.

Further information

Macmillan booklet:

Understanding Primary Bone Cancer

<http://be.macmillan.org.uk/be/p-236-understanding-primary-bone-cancer.aspx>

Websites:

<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Cancertypes/Bone/Typesofbonecancer/Chordoma.aspx>

Further support

Macmillan Cancer Support

Tel: 0808 080 2020

<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/home.aspx>

Oxford Sarcoma

<http://www.oxfordsarcoma.co.uk/>

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/leaflets/library.aspx

