

# Mesenchymal chondrosarcoma

Information for patients



## What is mesenchymal chondrosarcoma?

Mesenchymal chondrosarcoma is a malignant (cancerous) type of chondrosarcoma, or cancer of cartilage (connective tissue). Approximately two thirds of cases of mesenchymal chondrosarcoma occur in bone, while the rest occur in soft tissue (muscle or fat).

Unlike other types of malignant chondrosarcoma, which have a tendency to grow more slowly and rarely spread, mesenchymal chondrosarcoma is a fast growing tumour that spreads more often. At the same time, it can remain dormant (inactive) for long periods of time. It tends to affect children and young adults, but is a rare tumour, accounting for less than 1% of all sarcomas.

## Why does mesenchymal chondrosarcoma occur?

Cancer develops in cells that have undergone several changes in their genetic makeup that cause their growth to become abnormal. In healthy cells, complex molecular mechanisms (instructions) prevent cells from growing when they are not supposed to grow. It is thought that if these mechanisms go wrong, this can cause the cells to develop abnormally. However, it is currently not known exactly why this type of cancer develops.

## What does mesenchymal chondrosarcoma feel like?

Mesenchymal chondrosarcoma can cause swelling or pain, either in a limb or another part of the body. It may be diagnosed when it causes these symptoms near to where the tumour has developed.

Sometimes, the tumour may be detected early because it is seen on an X-ray that has been taken for other reasons.

The tumour can occur almost anywhere in the body but is known to spread to the lungs, soft tissues, and other major organs. The most common site to which the tumour spreads is the lungs. Sometimes, these tumours have already spread (metastasised) by the time the mesenchymal chondrosarcoma has been diagnosed. However, many people will not develop metastases until after their initial diagnosis.

## Treatment

Mesenchymal chondrosarcoma is normally treated by removing it with surgery. Chemotherapy is often given after surgery to kill any remaining tumour cells.

If the tumour is in a place which makes it too difficult to remove we may offer chemotherapy before the surgery. This may shrink the tumour enough for the surgeon to be able to remove it. This is known as neo-adjuvant chemotherapy.

You might be offered radiotherapy treatment after surgery. This is to treat any tumour cells that may still be present.

## Further reading

### **Websites:**

<http://sarcomahelp.org/mesenchymal-chondrosarcoma.html>

## Further support

### **Macmillan Cancer Support**

Tel: 0808 080 2020

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

### **Oxford Sarcoma**

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

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