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# Medicines for a Brain Tumor

Brain tumors often cause symptoms like headaches, seizures, mood swings, memory problems, and more. Many of these can be treated. To help you feel better and ease your symptoms, your healthcare provider may prescribe certain medicines, such as those covered here. These treatments may be called supportive care. They do not treat the brain tumor directly. But they help with the problems caused by the tumor or treatment.

Be sure to ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist if it's OK to take any new medicines along with your other medicines or treatments.



## Steroids

Steroids are used to reduce swelling and fluid build-up around the brain. This helps ease headaches and other symptoms like balance problems and tiredness. Most of the time you take steroids as pills at home. Always take steroids as directed. Don't stop taking them without your healthcare provider's approval. If you've been taking steroids for more than a few days, don't stop them right away. You'll need to slowly stop taking them over time as directed by your provider.

Common side effects can include:

- Swelling in your hands and feet (water retention)
- Increased appetite and thirst
- Weight gain
- Trouble sleeping (insomnia)

- Stomach upset and ulcers
- Increased risk of infection
- Muscle weakness
- Slow wound healing
- Mood changes
- Increased blood sugar levels that make diabetes harder to manage
- Fungal infection of the mouth (called oral thrush or oral candidiasis)

## **Anticonvulsants (antiseizure medicines)**

If you've had seizures, you may be given one of these medicines. Anticonvulsants help lower the chance of seizures and convulsions. Always take them as directed. You may need regular blood tests to make sure you're getting the right dose. If you've been taking this medicine for more than a few days, don't stop it right away. You will need to stop taking it slowly over time as directed by your provider.

Some of the more common side effects tend to go away after a few weeks. These include:

- Upset stomach
- Feeling tired
- Blurry vision

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these side effects:

- Trouble breathing
- Rash
- Balance problems
- Dizziness
- Signs of infection (such as fever or chills)
- Bruising or bleeding easier than normal

## **Other medicines**

Medicines can help treat side effects caused by the brain tumor or your cancer treatments. These include:

- Antiemetics to help control nausea and vomiting. There are many options and types of medicines that can be used. Make sure your provider knows if the medicine you have isn't working.
- Antacids to control stomach acid
- Laxatives or stool softeners to prevent or treat constipation

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- Pain relievers
  - Medicine to help with anxiety, stress, or depression
  - Hormones to replace the ones your body isn't making because of treatment or due to certain kinds of tumors

## **Working with your healthcare provider**

It's important to know which medicines you're taking. Write down the names of your medicines. Ask your healthcare team what they're for, how they work, how to take them, and what side effects they might cause.

Also talk about symptoms linked to the kind of brain tumor you have and the treatment you're getting. It helps to know what to watch for. Be sure to tell your provider about any changes you notice. There are often ways to manage them. There may be things you can do and medicines you can take to help prevent or control the problems caused by brain tumors.

Ask your provider when you need to call about symptoms. Know how to get help after office hours and on weekends and holidays.