



Tumors

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A tumor is a solid mass of abnormal cells which can develop in virtually any tissue in the body. Tumors can be benign or malignant. Additional terminology for tumors includes cancer and neoplasia.

Symptoms

May be asymptomatic

Symptoms are based on the size and the location of the tumor. As an example, tumors in the lung may cause coughing or difficulty breathing, and tumors in the intestine may cause vomiting, diarrhea, weight loss and/or anorexia. Tumors of the skin and subcutaneous tissues are very common and are the easiest to detect either visually or by feeling them.

Causes

Most times the reason for tumors and/or cancer developing are unknown. Some tumors can be linked to exposure to certain chemicals or toxins, and there may be certain breeds predisposed to developing specific tumors, such as hemangiosarcoma in Golden Retrievers and papillomas in Cocker Spaniels. Tumors occur more frequently as animals age, but can be found in animals less than a year of age.

Diagnostic Testing

A sample of the tumor can be collected by aspirating cells from the mass with a small needle and looking at this under a microscope (cytology); or by taking a larger sample using special instruments and sending in to a laboratory (biopsy).

X-rays can help to identify tumors in bone as well as soft tissue, although ultrasound may be preferred for tumors located in the abdominal cavity.

CT scan or MRI are useful for detecting tumors, especially in the lungs and spinal cord.

In some cases your doctor may give the option to remove the tumor with surgery and send the whole sample in to obtain a diagnosis, and the doctor will discuss which case this is best-suited for.

A malignant tumor has a potential to spread, or metastasize, and x-rays may be recommended to see if there is any involvement of the lungs, while an ultrasound can look for additional abdominal organ involvement.

Treatment

Surgical removal of the affected tissue and tumor is usually recommended. With certain tumors, surgery may not be possible and there may be alternative ways to treat the tumor which can be discussed with your doctor or an oncologist, who specializes in cancer treatment. Some tumors

can be reduced in size prior to surgery with either medical or radiation therapy, and this will depend on the type of tumor.

Post-operative Instructions

These will be based on the tumor type and location and over-all health of the patient. Most surgeries will require a 1-2 week recovery period for tissue healing.

Outcome

Prognosis is based on the tumor type, the ability to remove the entire tumor, if the tumor has already spread or has a high chance of doing so, and any additional health concerns for the patient.

Adjunctive therapy such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy may be possible depending on the tumor type, and your doctor may refer you to an oncology specialist to discuss further options.

Please note that this information does not replace a direct consultation with the patient and all clinical data, with a veterinary surgeon or veterinary oncologist. To schedule an appointment at Animal Specialty and Emergency Center, please call (310) 473-5906.

