If You Have Adrenal Cancer

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What is an adrenal tumor?

Tumors can start any place in the body. An adrenal tumor starts when cells in the adrenal glands grow out of control and crowd out normal cells. This makes it hard for the body to work the way it should.

Most tumors found in the adrenal glands are called adenomas. These are not cancer (benign) and don’t cause problems. Adenomas are sometimes found by accident when someone has tests for other reasons.

If an adrenal tumor is cancerous, the cancer cells can spread to other parts of the body. Cancer cells in the adrenal glands can sometimes travel to lymph nodes and other organs. When cancer cells do this, it’s called metastasis (pronounced meh-TAS-tuh-sis). To doctors, the cancer cells in the new place look just like the ones from the adrenal glands.

Cancer is always named for the place where it starts. Many cancers found in the
adrenal glands did not start there. In these cases, the cancer has spread from other organs, so it is not considered or treated like adrenal cancer. For example, if lung cancer spreads to the adrenal gland, it is still called lung cancer.

**The adrenal glands**

The adrenals are small glands that are right above the kidneys. The kidneys are inside the upper part of the belly.

The adrenals have 2 parts called the **cortex** and **medulla**. The main job of the adrenals is to make certain hormones. For example, some adrenal hormones help the body deal with stress and control blood pressure. Other adrenal hormones help develop sex organs and control puberty.
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