



PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUTS

Neurofibromatosis

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Neurofibromatosis is a genetic condition that causes noncancerous tumors to grow on nerves and produces abnormalities in the bones and skin. Most cases of neurofibromatosis are mild and do not require treatment.

The most common form of neurofibromatosis causes noncancerous tumors (neurofibromas) on or under the skin. Occasionally, noncancerous tumors may develop in the eyes and nervous system (brain and spinal cord). Neurofibromatosis also may cause dark spots to form on the skin that are similar to birthmarks (called café-au-lait spots). These may vary in size and color and may be found anywhere on the body.

A rare type of neurofibromatosis (acoustic neurofibromatosis) causes the growth of tumors on the spinal cord, in the brain, or on the cranial nerves. It most often affects the nerves that allow hearing. It causes hearing loss and may cause seizures.

There is no cure for neurofibromatosis, but treatment may relieve symptoms. Some people choose to have large or highly visible tumors removed by cosmetic surgery. Surgery to remove tumors of the spinal cord, brain, or other nerves under the skin may be needed if the tumors are causing pain or disfigurement.

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