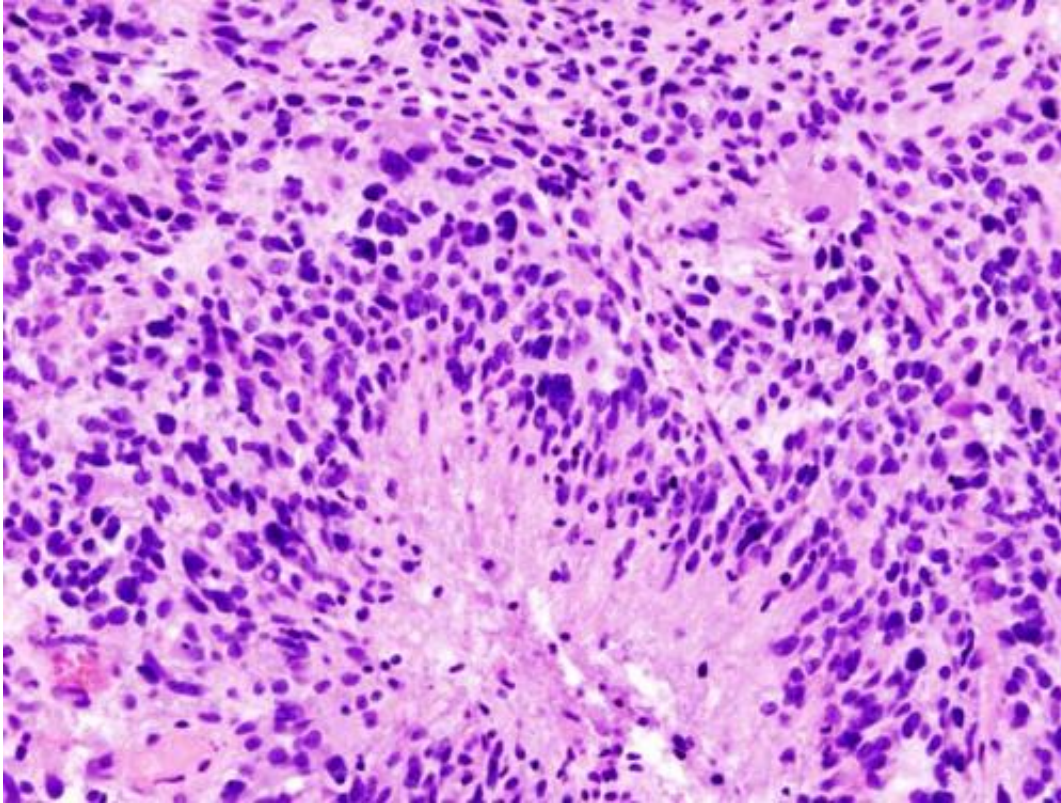


# Consumer Health: What is glioblastoma?

July 22 2023, by Laurel Kelly

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Glioblastoma (histology slide). Credit: Wikipedia/CC BY-SA 3.0

More than 14,490 people in the U.S. will be diagnosed with glioblastoma in 2023, according to the National Brain Tumor Society, and 10,000 people in the U.S. will die of the disease. The five-year survival rate is 6.9%, and the median length of survival is eight months.

Glioblastoma, also known as [glioblastoma multiforme](#), is a type of

glioma, which are tumors that occur in the brain and spinal cord. Glioblastoma is an [aggressive cancer](#) that forms from cells called astrocytes that support nerve cells. Glioblastoma can happen at any age, but it tends to occur more often in older adults and more often in men than women.

## Symptoms

Glioma symptoms depend on the location of the glioma. Symptoms also may depend on the type of glioma, its size and how quickly it's growing.

Common signs and symptoms of glioblastoma include:

- Headaches that keep getting worse.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Blurred or double vision.
- Seizures.

## Treatment

Treatment may slow progression of the cancer, and reduce signs and symptoms. But glioblastoma can be difficult to treat, and a cure often is not possible. When it comes to developing a care plan, it's important to weigh the benefits of treatment against side effects that might reduce quality of life.

Glioblastoma treatment options include:

- Surgery to remove the glioblastoma: The goal of surgery is to remove as much of the tumor as possible. But because glioblastoma grows into the normal brain tissue, complete removal isn't possible. For this reason, most people receive

additional treatments after surgery to target the remaining cells.

- **Radiation therapy:** Radiation therapy usually is recommended after surgery and may be combined with chemotherapy. For people who can't undergo surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy may be used as a primary treatment.
- **Chemotherapy:** Chemotherapy uses drugs to kill cancer cells, and it may be administered during surgery, after surgery and if [glioblastoma](#) recurs.
- **Tumor treating fields therapy:** This therapy uses an [electrical field](#) to disrupt the tumor cells' ability to multiply. Adhesive pads are applied to the scalp and connected to a portable device that generates the electrical field. Tumor treating fields therapy is combined with chemotherapy, and it may be recommended after [radiation therapy](#).
- **Targeted [drug therapy](#):** Targeted drug therapy focuses on specific abnormalities in cancer cells that allow them to grow and thrive. The drugs attack those abnormalities, causing the cancer cells to die.
- **Clinical trials:** Clinical trials are studies of new treatments. These studies give you a chance to try the latest treatment options, but the risk of side effects may not be known. Ask your [health care](#) professional whether you might be eligible to participate in a clinical trial.

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