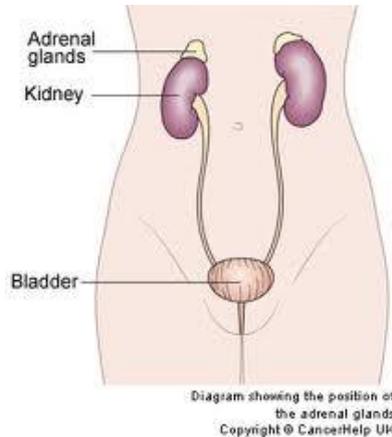


PHAEOCHROMOCYTOMA

Phaeochromocytoma is a rare tumour of the adrenal gland. There are 2 adrenal glands located on top of the kidneys.



Phaeochromocytomas produce hormone(s) including Adrenaline which is known for causing the “fright or flight” response. As the tumour production of hormone occurs episodically, the symptoms are typically episodic as well.

About a quarter of these tumours occur on both sides, about a quarter occur outside the adrenal glands and about a quarter may be malignant (cancerous).

These tumours may occur as part of an inherited/ genetic condition.

Symptoms and signs

The symptoms and signs of phaeochromocytoma are typically episodic and include:

- High blood pressure (which may be dangerously high) and heart rate
- Palpitations
- Sweating
- Headache
- Flushing/ being pale
- Shaking
- Anxiety
- Abdominal pain

Diagnosis

Typically, blood tests and 24 hour urine collections are required for diagnosis.

Imaging tests, such as CT scans, MRI’s or nuclear medicine (MIBG) scans may be required.

Depending on individual circumstances, your doctor may choose to organise genetic testing for underlying genetic conditions.

Treatment

Generally, surgical removal of the affected adrenal gland is required. Special preparation with medication is required prior to the surgery (2 weeks usually), to ensure blood pressure/ heart rate are safely controlled at the time of surgery.

In the case of cancerous tumours, additional treatment may be required.