**For young children**

- A brain tumor is a lump in the brain that doesn’t belong there. The doctor is going to operate and take it out. The operation will help get rid of [the patient’s] symptoms.
- With the tumor in there, the computer center of the brain doesn’t work the way it’s supposed to. That’s why [the patient] gets headaches and seizures.
- No one knows what causes a brain tumor. They just happen. But we do know that nothing you did, or thought, or said, caused the tumor. Nothing you ever wished made this happen. Nothing your brother or sister or friends said made this happen.
- We also know that you don’t “catch” brain tumors from other people. They just happen. You won’t catch a brain tumor from [the patient].

**For older children**

- A brain tumor is a collection of abnormal cells in the brain which are growing out of control. These cells were originally normal brain cells. For no good reason, they started to divide and make more of themselves. This growing collection of cells is called a tumor.
- As the cells continue to make more of themselves, the tumor gets bigger and bigger, like a balloon inflating. Since there isn’t a lot of extra room in the brain, the tumor may start to squish areas of the brain, causing them not to work properly.
- The doctor does not have a prognosis yet — that’s a prediction of what will happen to the [patient] because of the brain tumor.

**For teens, use your best judgment.** Most teens will want and appreciate detailed, accurate information. You will want to explain:

- A brain tumor is an abnormal mass of tissue or cells growing in the brain.
- The tumor is benign, meaning it’s not cancer, but it’s still pressing on the brain or the tumor is malignant, which means that it is cancer.
- The pressure on the brain from the tumor can cause [the patient] to lose important brain functions. They’ve done an MRI and the general location of the tumor is [show teen brain anatomy and point out where the tumor may be]. The doctors aren’t sure yet what changes that will cause.
- [The patient] is going to need brain surgery by a neurosurgeon to remove the tumor.
- We don’t know the prognosis yet. After surgery we will know more.
Talking with your Children about Tests, Treatment and Side Effects

For young children
- The doctor wants to do some tests to find out why the patient is having headaches.
- A neurosurgeon is a doctor who knows a lot about the brain.
- During surgery, the neurosurgeon will open the patient’s head and try to remove the tumor. It won’t hurt the patient, but he/she will need to stay in the hospital for a while.
- An MRI scan takes pictures of your brain, but it can’t see what you are thinking.
- Chemotherapy is also called “chemo.” The patient will go to the hospital every day, every week to get medicine that will try to kill the bad cells in the brain tumor. The chemo might make the patient tired, or feel like throwing up, or both. It also may cause the patient to lose hair, but it will grow back.
- Radiation therapy is another way to kill the bad cells in the brain tumor. The patient will go to a machine that uses energy rays to try and kill the bad cells. The machine won’t hurt the patient but the patient’s hair might fall out near where the tumor is. He/she might also not feel like eating, or feel tired.
- The patient will have some side effects from treatment. Side effects are problems caused by the medicine and treatments. Our doctor told us that the patient might feel and act much differently than usual. The tumor and the treatment both affect the brain, so they may affect the parts that affect physical movement and thinking. That means he/she could have trouble walking, talking, and personality may change. It could also affect memory. [Describe what the doctor has told you].

For older children and teens:
- The patient will need surgery to remove the brain tumor. The patient will be in the hospital for a while afterwards to recover. It may be a tough recovery. After the surgery, we’ll talk with the doctors to see if the patient needs further treatment to reduce the tumor.
- Chemotherapy is also called “chemo.” It's a treatment that uses drugs to kill cancer tissue. (You can discuss here whether and how often the patient will need to go to the hospital for chemotherapy treatment, or if the patient will be taking the chemo in pill form at home). Chemotherapy causes some side effects that might be hard for the patient. He/she might lose hair, which will grow back, experience nausea and vomiting, get mouth sores, feel tired (fatigue), and could have a greater chance of getting infections. The doctor told me that the patient might experience [describe what the doctor has told you].
- Radiation therapy is a treatment that uses high-energy rays to kill cancer cells. This treatment is given by a machine or by materials put in or near the tumor. The patient might lose hair where he/she is being treated, and might have trouble eating. He/she might also feel tired.
- The patient is going to participate in a clinical trial. That means he/she will be part of a research study that uses volunteers to compare new treatments with the standard or usual treatments.
- The patient may start to feel and act much differently than usual. The tumor and the treatment both affect the brain, so they may affect the parts that affect physical movement and thinking. That means he/she could have trouble walking, talking, and personality may change. It could also affect memory. [Describe what the doctor has told you].