

DEFINITION

1. A **craniopharyngioma** is a growth involving the pituitary gland. It consists of cystic cavities lined with ciliated epithelium and containing cholesterol crystals, which are separated by areas of connective tissue.

CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

2. The symptoms depend upon the site of the tumour and the age of the patient.
 - 2.1. **Intrasellar craniopharyngiomas** inhibit growth in young subjects. The result is a fat impotent dwarf who may subsequently develop bitemporal hemianopia from upward pressure on the chiasma (Fröhlich's syndrome).
 - 2.2. **Suprasellar craniopharyngiomas** in young subjects, by downward pressure on the sella, also produce Fröhlich's syndrome. Pressure on the adjacent centres of the hypothalamus, which control sleep and water metabolism, produce pathological somnolence and diabetes insipidus. Similar symptoms may appear at a later stage in adults.
3. Further upward extension of a tumour, or a tumour which arises within the third ventricle, may cause hydrocephalus by obstructing the flow of cerebrospinal fluid, thereby raising the intracranial pressure.

AETIOLOGY

4. Craniopharyngiomas arise as a result of a congenital abnormality.
5. Environmental factors do not affect the course of craniopharyngiomas.

CONCLUSION

6. A **craniopharyngioma** is a tumour of the pituitary gland resulting from a congenital abnormality which is unaffected by environmental factors.

REFERENCES

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