

Leptomeningeal Disease (LMD)

What is it?

LMD is the spread (metastasis) of cancer cells to the thin layers of tissue that cover the brain and spinal cord (meninges) and/or the fluid that cushions your brain and spinal cord (Cerebrospinal fluid or CSF). This differs from brain metastases because it is not a tumor growing in the brain tissue itself. LMD can occur from any cancer but is most common in breast, lung, melanoma, and kidney cancers.

What are the signs and symptoms?

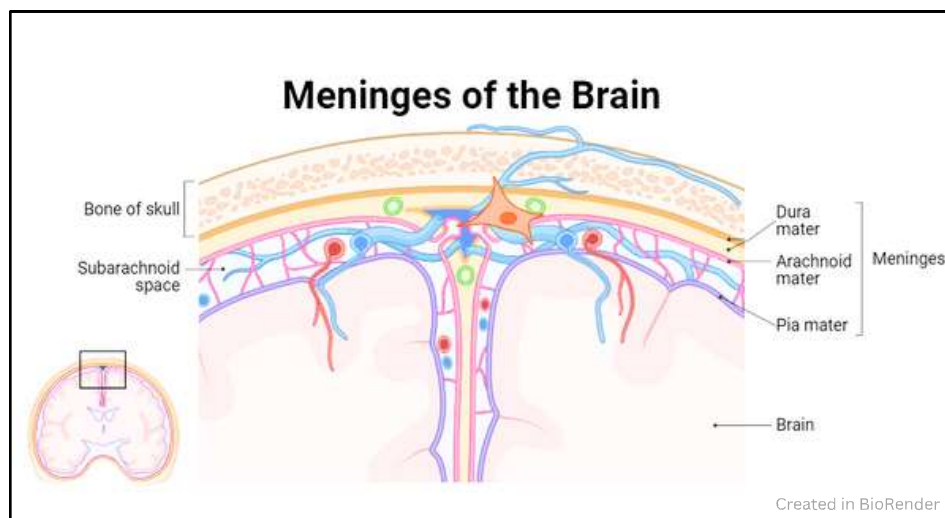
- Headache
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Arm or leg weakness
- Changes in how you walk
- Confusion or changes in behavior
- Double vision
- Weakness
- Difficulty passing urine or stool
- Numbness or tingling
- Seizure

Having one LMD symptom doesn't mean you will develop others—each case is different.

How is it diagnosed?

Your provider will order tests to check if your symptoms are caused by LMD, likely including

- Brain MRI
- Spine MRI
- Lumbar puncture (removal and testing of CSF from your spinal canal)



What's the treatment?

Treatment may include one or more of the following.

- Radiation therapy, which may include one area, the whole brain, or the brain and spinal cord.
- Intrathecal (IT) chemotherapy delivered into your CSF through a special port placed in your skull
- Chemotherapy, targeted therapy, and/or immunotherapy
- New therapies, which may be an option through a clinical trial

After treatment, you may need follow-ups with MRI imaging and CSF sampling to monitor your status.

Can it be cured?

LMD is a serious metastatic cancer that is treatable but not curable. Your provider can discuss your unique case, and supportive care can help manage symptoms and quality of life.

Questions to ask your doctor

- What is my prognosis (outlook), both with and without treatment?
- What treatment options are available?
- What are the risks and benefits of treatment?
- Do you recommend getting a second opinion?
- How will treatment affect my daily activities?
- Would a clinical trial be right for me?
- How do you determine if treatment is effective? What follow-up tests are needed?
- What support services are available to me?



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Supportive Resources

Developed with the Metastatic Brain Tumor Collaborative

Reviewed by:
Adrienne Boire, MD, PhD
Alireza Mansouri, MD
Priya Kumthaker, MD