Hepatoblastoma - is a rare cancerous tumor that begins in a child's liver. The liver is one of the largest organs in the body and its primary functions include filtering and storing blood. It predominantly affects young children (under age 5) and while the exact cause is unknown, some genetic conditions, hepatitis B infection, and biliary atresia (a blockage in the ducts that carry bile) can put a child at increased risk. Hepatoblastoma can spread to other parts of the body; however the most common site is the lungs.

Symptoms may include:
- A large abdominal mass or swollen abdomen
- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss / decreased appetite
- Vomiting
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and/or eyes)
- Anemia
- Back pain (from compression of the tumor)
- Itchy skin
- Fever

Diagnosis

Diagnosing Hepatoblastoma begins with a thorough health history and a comprehensive physical examination. Some testing will be required and may include blood work, an alpha–fetoprotein test (a protein produced by the liver that can be used both for diagnosing and determining response to treatment), an x-ray, ultrasound, CT scan, and an MRI. A liver biopsy, most commonly performed by making a small incision in the abdomen and inserting a thin needle through the abdomen into the liver, is performed to remove a small piece of tissue for examination under a microscope to determine its exact pathology.

If hepatoblastoma is the diagnosis, your doctor will stage the tumor, which determines if and how far the cancer has spread. Staging the tumor will help determine a treatment plan.

Treatment

Treatment options include:

- surgery (to remove tumor and part of or all the liver)
- chemotherapy (sometimes needed prior to surgery to help shrink the tumor)
- liver transplant (if mass is not surgically resectable without removing entire liver)
- supportive care (for the side effects of treatment)
- antibiotics (to prevent and treat infections)
- continuous follow-up care (to determine response to treatment, detect recurrent disease and manage late effects of treatment)

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