



Brain Tumor or Migraine?

The diagnosis is rarely a brain tumor in a patient who passes a normal neurological exam with no other complaints except for a recurring headache. Below are a number of symptoms that have been identified as 'red flags' that may indicate something more serious.¹

Symptom	Brain Tumor	Migraine
Changes to headache pattern	✓	✗ Rapid changes are not common unless there are significant changes to trigger factors or treatments.
Tension-like headache	✓	✗ Migraneurs often notice the difference between a migraine & tension headache.
Prolonged repetitious vomiting.	✓	✗ Whilst nausea & vomiting is common with migraine it is generally not prolonged or repetitious.
Any <u>new</u> motor weakness	✓	✗ Motor weakness is a symptom in migraine, but not usually new symptom.
Coughing	✓	✗
Sneezing	✓	✗
Throbbing headache	✓	✓
Aura – visual symptoms or signs	✓	✓
Headache getting worse when bending over	✓	✓
Unresponsive to therapy	✓	✓ Migraines may not respond to some common treatments.

¹ Prestegaard, AR. 'Is This A Brain Tumor That Hurts'. Michigan Headache & Neurological Institute. Accessed 28 Jul 2015.



Diagnostic Criteria for Migraine

The most widely accepted classification amongst the medical community comes from an international body called the International Headache Society (IHS).²

The IHS classifies a headache as a migraine when:

1. The pain has at least two of the following characteristics:

- Moderate to severe pain intensity
- One-sided location in the head
- Pulsating or throbbing quality
- Aggravated by general movement

2. There is at least one of the following

- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Sensitivity to light and noise

3. The headache attack lasts from 4-72 hours if untreated.

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER:

The purpose of this report is to provide you with a better idea about what symptoms health professionals may use to differentiate a brain tumor from migraine.

This does not cover professional diagnostic tests, scans or exams that health professionals use to confirm your diagnosis. If you have any doubts, questions or concerns you should immediately see your doctor. This document does not constitute medical advice or diagnosis.

Only your doctor can provide you with an informed and accurate diagnosis.

If you are one of the *rare cases* with a malignant brain tumor, delaying a few weeks can have serious implications. If you're concerned or unsure, often it's better to be safe than sorry, make an appointment today.

² Olesen, J. "The international classification of headache disorders. (ICHD-II)." *Revue neurologique* 161.6 (2005): 689-691.