Skull base surgery

We offer a comprehensive skull base service integrating lateral, anterior and central skull base in one multidisciplinary team of experts in the field. This ensures a personalised experience for patients, who are provided with a balanced view of their management options and supported through the decision making process.

At Addenbrooke’s Hospital, we carry out extremely complex surgery on a variety of conditions affecting the skull base, including the removal of benign growths called acoustic neuroma.

Our neurosurgeons also repair leaks of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), which is the clear liquid surrounding the brain.

Skull base surgery is an extremely specialist area, as it includes the eye sockets, ears, nose and sinuses and all of the connections between the brain and the rest of the body. As a result, it is carried out by a highly skilled multidisciplinary team with experience in neurosurgery, ear nose and throat conditions and ophthalmology.

The most common condition affecting the skull base is a tumour. Most often this is a benign, non-cancerous growth called an acoustic neuroma or vestibular Schwannoma. These tumours grow on the acoustic nerve which runs alongside the facial nerve, and can cause problems with hearing and balance, as well as headaches and difficulties with limb coordination on one side of the body. As the symptoms can vary widely depending on the size of the tumour, the condition can be difficult to diagnose. Patients referred to us by their GP will normally have a hearing test and MRI or CT scan to help us make a firm diagnosis.

There are several different treatment options for an acoustic neuroma depending on your age, overall health, and the size and position of your tumour. If it is small and not causing any problems, our team may decide to monitor it rather than carry out any specific treatment. Alternatively, we may recommend surgery to remove it or radiotherapy to destroy the cells making up the tumour.

CSF leaks happen when the cerebrospinal fluid surrounding the brain and spine leaks through the skull or dura and out through the nose or ear. It usually causes a severe headache, nausea, dizziness and problems with vision and, in some cases, can lead to meningitis. Because of this risk, endoscopic surgery through the nasal passage is usually
carried out to repair the leak.

Our team will closely monitor all patients after skull base surgery, both during their recovery in the hospital and in our outpatient clinics. This care will continue during any follow up treatment you may need.

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