

## Patient information factsheet

# Incidental pineal cyst

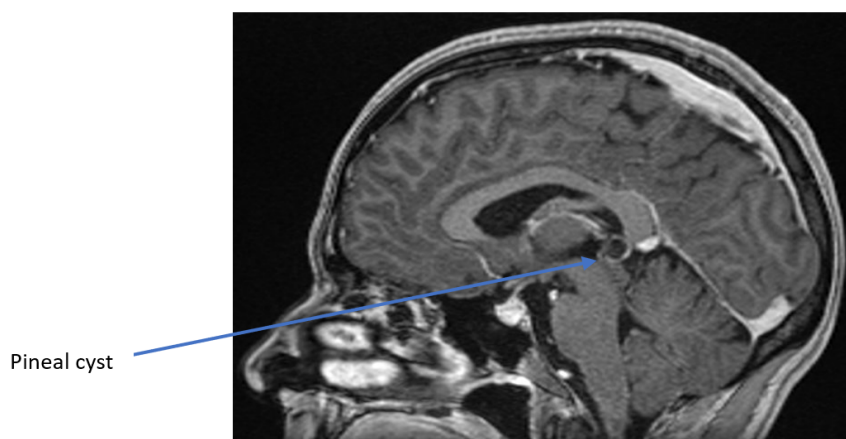
We have given you this factsheet because you have been referred to the Wessex Neurological Centre after a recent brain scan (a CT or MRI scan) has shown that you have an incidental pineal cyst.

This factsheet explains what an incidental pineal cyst is, what this diagnosis means for you, and when to seek medical advice. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact your general practitioner (GP) or the healthcare team who referred you for the brain scan.

### What is an incidental pineal cyst?

A pineal cyst is a **non-cancerous** (benign), fluid-filled lump that is found in the pineal gland in the brain. The pineal gland sits in the middle of the brain and is responsible for making melatonin (the hormone that regulates sleep).

A pineal cyst does not affect how the pineal gland works and cannot spread to other parts of the body. It can be present for years without causing any symptoms and is usually only discovered when a person has a brain scan for another medical reason. If the pineal cyst is found as a result of another medical reason, it is known as an 'incidental pineal cyst'.



### How common are pineal cysts?

Recent studies estimate that in the entire population, approximately 5 in every 1,000 people have a pineal cyst. Pineal cysts are more common in women and people in their 30s and 40s.

### What causes pineal cysts?

The exact cause of pineal cysts remains unknown. However, given that they are most commonly found in women in their 30s and 40s and are very rare before puberty or after menopause, hormones may play a role in causing the cysts.

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## What are the symptoms?

Pineal cysts do not usually cause any symptoms. It is likely that your pineal cyst has been present for years without you being aware of it or it affecting you in any way.

## Will I need any treatment or monitoring?

Incidental pineal cysts do not need to be treated or monitored. However, very occasionally, we may need to request some additional scans to be certain that it is an incidental pineal cyst.

## Can I drive?

There are currently no driving restrictions if you have an incidental pineal cyst.

## When should I seek medical advice?

Incidental pineal cysts are small and very rarely cause symptoms. However, if the pineal cyst grows or bleeds, it can on rare occasions cause a buildup of fluid on the brain, medically known as hydrocephalus. If this happens, you may experience the following symptoms:

- progressive headaches which are worse in the morning and do not respond to pain relief medication (for example, paracetamol)
- double vision
- vertigo (the feeling that you, or the environment around you, is moving or spinning)
- nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting
- difficulty walking
- excessive sleepiness
- episodes of collapse

If you experience any of the symptoms above, contact your GP or NHS 111 for advice.

## Useful links

Brain & Spine Foundation

Telephone: **0808 808 1000**

Website: [www.brainandspine.org.uk](http://www.brainandspine.org.uk)

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