Possible effects of brain tumours and their treatment for adults

Cognitive

Difficulties with:
- Attention/concentration
- Memory
- Learning

Communication (speech; understanding language/instructions; reading social cues)
- Processing speed/problem-solving
- Planning
- Visual-spatial awareness

Seizures

This can range from feeling a bit strange or absent, through making strange movements and sounds, to a convulsive seizure

Auditory

Deafness
- Partial hearing loss
- Sensitivity to sound

Hydrocephalus

(build-up of fluid in the brain)
- Leading to:
  - Headaches
  - Being sick
  - Difficulty walking

Visual

Blindness/partial sight
- Cataracts
- Double vision
- Unco-ordinated eye movements
- Other visual defects, e.g. blind spots

Taste, appetite and digestion

Nausea or vomiting
- Sore mouth
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation
- Heartburn

Changes in taste/appetite
- Bowel and bladder problems (incontinence/double incontinence)

Skin

Rashes
- Changes in colour
- Skin thinning
- Increased sensitivity to sunlight
- Bruising

Taste, appetite and digestion

Changes in taste/appetite

Bowel and bladder problems (incontinence/double incontinence)

Fine motor control

Difficulties with:
- Writing
- Getting dressed

Mobility

Difficulties with:
- Walking
- Climbing stairs
- Co-ordination
- Balance

Nerve damage

Pain in extremities in cold weather
- Difficulty making facial expressions

General effects:

Fatigue

Extreme tiredness (physical and mental), drowsiness, lethargy, sleep disturbance, somnolence syndrome (excessive drowsiness that can occur 4-6 weeks after radiotherapy).

Behavioural effects

Personality changes, anger, irritability, impatience, anti-social behaviour, impulsiveness, heightened or inhibited sexual behaviour.

Lowered immunity

Increased risk of infections, more severe forms of common illnesses.

Practical effects

Loss of driving licence, financial difficulties.

Endocrine changes

Leading to:
- Tiredness, weight gain, depression, growth impairment, sensitivity to cold, feeling thirsty, needing to go to the toilet more often, diabetes, infertility, erectile dysfunction.

Emotional effects

Loss of self-confidence, loss of independence, low self-esteem, feelings of social isolation, anxiety and ‘scanchyti’ (anxiety about scan results), depression, fear of tumour recurring, feeling of having to be the strong one for family and friends, fear of dying. (Effect on family members/friends/colleagues).

Every person is different and will experience different side-effects.

There are over 150 types of brain tumours

The side-effects will depend on the type and location of the tumour, the treatment received and the individual response.

One person will not have all these side-effects.

Some will be short-term; others may be long-term or delayed.