

Important

You don't have to tell your employer about your, or your loved one's, diagnosis unless:

- It is likely to affect your ability to do the job
- It poses a risk to yourself or others whilst at work

Should I tell my employer?

Deciding whether to tell your employer can be difficult. To help with your decision, think about the things that you worry would happen if you tell your employer (the cons), but also the reasons why it can be a good thing to tell them (the pros).

Cons

I worry that:

- My employer may sack me or find an excuse to make me redundant*
- My employer may not support me, making it difficult for me to stay in work*
- It is very competitive in my industry and I may lose out on promotion/getting the good jobs*
- I may get moved to a lower paid or less demanding job without my agreement*
- People may treat me differently*
 - this could range from being awkward around me or unnecessarily treating me with kid gloves, to being teased, whispered about, insulted or bullied (harassment)

* Being sacked or made redundant because of your diagnosis, or discrimination/harassment/victimisation should not happen, as there are laws which protect you (see the *Employment charter sheet*)

(You also need to consider, that if your employer does any of the above, whether you have the inclination and energy to challenge them and take legal action/take them to a tribunal on top of everything else you are dealing with.)



Pros

- It can be easier to be upfront at the beginning – less stress is caused by trying to hide symptoms / pretend everything is alright / explain time off for hospital appointments, treatments, etc. Some people find it is a great weight taken off their shoulders
- If your ability to do your work is affected, now or in the future, it allows your employer to understand why – they may turn out to be very supportive
- Your employer can work with you to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to help you carry on working, e.g. time off for hospital appointments, reduced or flexible hours**

- These adjustments can allow you to stay in work which many people find important, as it can give a sense of normality and may be essential for your finances
- You have the ability to make a formal complaint if your employer does not make ‘reasonable adjustments’
- Colleagues who may have noticed something is wrong, but felt unable to say anything, can now offer support
- Ability to correct any misunderstandings or misinformed ideas about what having a brain tumour and its treatment means e.g. some people have been known to think that it may be catching or that having radiotherapy makes you radioactive
- Protection from discrimination, harassment or victimisation due to your tumour

** For more information about ‘reasonable adjustments’, see the [Employment adjustments \(example\) sheet](#)

Ultimately, unless you have to disclose your illness, whether to tell your employer is a personal decision.

Use this page to jot down your own pros and cons to help you decide:

Pros

Cons



How to tell your employer

If you decide to, or have to, tell your employer, you may want to consider the following questions first:

Why do I want to tell my employer?

It may be because you have to. For example, you have a job that involves driving and you have had to surrender your driving licence or are in military service within the armed forces.

Or it could be because it becomes obvious, e.g. there may be changes in your appearance caused by treatment, such as hair loss, or you need a lot of time off for treatment and recovery or appointments.

Or it could be because you think it will be easier for you, or for any of the pros listed previously in this sheet. Telling your employer can enable you to continue working, or return to work after treatment, if that is what you want to do. This can be important as it can give you a sense of normality.

When do I want to tell my employer?

This decision may be taken out of your hands, as you may have to have time off for treatment fairly soon after diagnosis. However, you still don't have to say what the treatment is for.

Do you want to tell them straight away, or only if the effects become noticeable? It can help to consider all the questions on this sheet first to be clear on what and how you want to say it.

Who do I want to tell?

The best people to tell are your manager or, if your workplace has one, your HR (Human Resources) department. If they also have an occupational health adviser, it can be helpful to ask your manager/HR to refer you to them.

What do I want to tell?

It is up to you how much you disclose.

You may need to talk to your healthcare team about what is likely to affect your work and how it will affect it, e.g. time off for treatment and recovery, side-effects you are more likely to experience.

If you don't want to go into details about how your tumour affects you, you may find it useful to increase your employer's awareness of the effects of brain tumours by showing them the body map, *Possible effects of brain tumours and their treatment (for adults)*, which is part of these Employment resources. This will help them understand what you are dealing with. You could highlight those effects which affect you.

Work out beforehand what 'adjustments' you would like your employer to consider. Your doctor/health team could help with this. And use the *Employment adjustment* sheets from these Employment resources to help you and your employer understand what might help you, and to record what is agreed.

How do I want to tell them?

This could be as an informal chat, or you may prefer a more formal meeting.

Think about whether you want to have someone with you when you speak to your employer, and who that might be – a friend at work, a trusted colleague, a union representative.

Write down what you want to say, so you don't forget anything. You may want to practise what you are going to say, so you feel comfortable with it.

Take notes, so that you have a record of what was said, and send them a copy.



Whether to tell other colleagues

This is a personal decision – you may want to be very open and let people know, or you may prefer to keep everything private – or something in between, e.g. only telling a few people.

If the side-effects of your tumour or treatment are not obvious, some people like to keep everything as normal as possible.

Other signs, such as hair loss, are more obvious, which will make it more difficult not to tell them. Signs can also be misinterpreted, e.g. if you have balance issues, people may think you are drunk. In addition, any adjustments you agree with your employer, such as starting work later or having extra breaks, may be

misinterpreted by colleagues – they may think you are being given preferential treatment. However, you still don't have to explain if you don't want to.

Your employer is not allowed to tell your colleagues about your brain tumour unless you agree to it.

