

Possible effects of brain tumours

and their treatment

Cognitive

Difficulties with:

Attention	Communication (speech; understanding language/instructions; reading social cues)	Problem-Solving
Concentration		Reasoning
Memory		Planning
Learning	Processing speed	Visual-spatial awareness

Auditory

Deafness
Partial hearing loss

Taste, appetite & digestion

Nausea or vomiting	Changes in taste/appetite
Sore mouth	Bowel & bladder problems (incontinence/double incontinence)
Diarrhoea	
Constipation	
Heartburn	

Changes in appearance

Hair loss	Ommaya reservoir or shunt (device for removing excess fluid in the brain - visible bump on the head)
Scars	
Weight gain or loss	Slow growth/short stature
Puffiness of the face	Delayed puberty
Water retention in hands & feet	
Central/PICC lines/portacath (tubes for delivering chemotherapy drugs that stay in place during course of treatment)	

Hydrocephalus

(build-up of fluid in the brain)

Leading to:

Headaches	Blurred vision
Being sick	Difficulty walking

Visual

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

Skin

Rashes	Increased sensitivity to sunlight
Changes in colour	Bruising
Skin thinning	

Fine motor control

Difficulties with:

Writing
Getting dressed

Mobility

Difficulties with:

Walking	Muscle wasting & cramps
Climbing stairs	Use of wheelchair or walking aids
Co-ordination	
Balance	

Nerve damage

Leading to:

Pain in extremities in cold weather	Difficulty making facial expressions
-------------------------------------	--------------------------------------

General effects:

Lowered immunity

Increased risk of infections, More severe forms of common, childhood illnesses e.g. chickenpox

Fatigue

Extreme tiredness (physical & mental), Drowsiness, Lethargy, Sleep disturbance, Somnolence syndrome (excessive drowsiness that can occur 4-6 weeks after radiotherapy).

Behavioural effects

Personality changes, Tantrums/anger/irritability, Anti-social behaviour, Impulsiveness, Heightened or inhibited sexual behaviour

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, Low self-esteem, Feelings of social isolation, Anxiety & 'scanxiety' (anxiety about scan results), Depression, Fear of tumour recurring, Fear of dying, (Effect on siblings/friends)

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

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.

