

Possible effects of brain tumours

and their treatment

Cognitive

Difficulties with:

Attention/
Concentration
Memory
Learning

Communication
(speech; understanding
language/instructions;
reading social cues)
Reasoning

Processing speed/
Problem-Solving
Planning
Visual-spatial awareness

Hydrocephalus

(build-up of fluid in the brain)

Leading to:

Headaches Blurred vision
Being sick Difficulty walking

Auditory

Deafness
Partial hearing loss

Visual

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

Taste, appetite and digestion

Nausea or vomiting
Sore mouth
Diarrhoea
Constipation
Heartburn

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

Skin

Rashes Increased sensitivity
Changes in colour to sunlight
Skin thinning Bruising

Changes in appearance

Hair loss
Scars
Weight gain or loss
Puffiness of the face
Water retention in
hands & feet
Central/PICC lines/
portacath
(tubes for delivering
chemotherapy drugs that
stay in place during course
of treatment)

Ommaya reservoir
or shunt
(device for removing excess
fluid in the brain - visible
bump on the head)
Slow growth/short
stature
Delayed puberty

Fine motor control

Difficulties with:
Writing
Getting dressed

Mobility

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

Nerve damage

Leading to:
Pain in extremities Difficulty making
in cold weather facial expressions

General effects:

Lowered immunity

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

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, 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 and
'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.

