



Brain Tumour Australia Information

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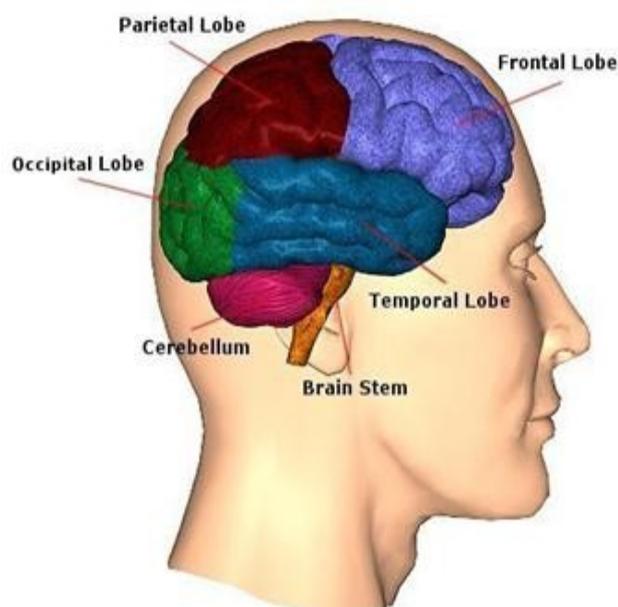
Possible effects of brain tumours

Tumour Effects

Some of the effects of a brain tumour described here may be relevant, or they may not.

Important

As individual parts of the brain controls the various things that we do, some of the following experiences may occur, or they may not. Each person is unique and consequently may not ever undergo any of these changes.



Frontal Lobes

Changes to a person's personality and intellect often occur

1. Personality

- Loss of spontaneity in interaction with family/friends etc
- Unable to be flexible in thinking processes
- Mood changes
- Changes in social behaviour, eg. Impulsive may swear, tell off-colour jokes
- Unrealistic optimism, lack of initiative and Spontaneity

2. Intellectual

- Difficulty with problem solving
- Inability to focus on task
- Inability to plan a sequence of complex movements required to complete multi stepped tasks eg. making a cup of tea, a meal etc

Individuals with frontal tumours may become stuck at any of the stages of the thinking process. This type of

behaviour problem depends on whether the tumour is situated on the left or right side only.

Temporal lobes

Changes may result in problems with short-term memory, and long term memory may be interfered with. In addition the following differences may be experienced.

1. Personality

- Decreased/increased interest in sexual behaviour
- Talk persistently (right lobe)
- Increased aggressive behaviour

2. Intellectual

- Difficulty in understanding spoken language. This is because it may be difficult to distinguish the different speech sounds. The ability to alter or change speech and correct errors may not occur because of a lack of awareness that speaking problems have arisen. Speech frequently becomes unintelligible.
- However, written language may still be understood
- Difficulty in recognition of people's faces, or identifying or categorising objects

Parietal lobes

The following problems may occur:

- Inability to name objects
- Inability to locate the correct words for writing & problems with reading
- Changes in the ability to perform calculations and mathematical tasks
- Difficulty drawing
- Difficulty in distinguishing right from left
- Difficulties with hand/eye coordination
- Self care & body awareness. Individuals may neglect one half of their body while bathing, dressing or combing hair
- Difficulties with touch, pain, temperature or body Position
- Problems with spatial location. Individuals may have difficulties finding their way about; judging the size of objects or distance from them; remembering where furniture is in the room



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Possible Effects & Managing Symptoms

Occipital lobes

The following may prove difficult:

- Changes to visual field - deficits in vision
- Identifying colours
- Inability to recognise words
- Difficulty in recognising items in drawings - visual illusions
- Seeing objects inaccurately
- Difficulty with reading and writing
- Experiencing visual hallucinations

Cerebellum

The following difficulties may be experienced:

- An inability to reach for and handle objects
- Speech may be slurred
- Reduced ability to coordinate fine motor skills eg. Hand to eye coordination, scratching the nose, writing etc
- Walking may be affected
- Tremors may occur

Limbic system

(found in the central part of the brain near the temporal lobe)

Tumours may cause problems with:

- Memory and learning
- Problems with emotions eg. Individuals may not be able to control their emotions. (they may cry over nothing or they may laugh when it is not appropriate). Sometimes individuals may realise that their tears or laughter is not an appropriate response but may be unable to stop it happening

Brain stem

Difficulties may be experienced with the following:

- Swallowing
- Breathing
- Digestion
- Body temperature (eg. Perspiration)
- Blood pressure
- Balance
- Ability to sleep/relax

The brain receives messages from the brain stem to keep it in a state of awakedness. Damage to the brain stem may result in increased periods of unconsciousness.

The Brain- Managing Symptoms

Clinical Symptoms

Brain swelling and pressure in the head

The presence of a tumour in the brain can cause problems in the area surrounding the tumour. These problems can involve swelling or oedema of the tissue. Medication can be taken to reduce the swelling and the pressure that it applies to other areas of the brain. This medication most commonly used for this is **Dexamethasone**

[see FACT SHEET 19]

Physical Symptoms

If nausea occur ask your treating doctor for medication to reduce or prevent symptoms

Also a referral to a dietician may assist with nutritional strategies to reduce nausea

If headaches occur ask your treating doctor for medication to reduce symptoms [Remember not everyone diagnosed with a brain tumours experiences headaches]

If changes occur in body movements which effect independence; ask for a referral to a physiotherapist or occupational therapist

If difficulties occur with speech or language ask for a referral to a speech pathologist

Cognitive Symptoms

If it is evident that difficulties are occurring with memory, reading and completing usual tasks seek a referral to a Neuro-psychologist

Check the FACT SHEETS for strategies to assist both the person diagnosed with the brain tumour and the care giver