

BRAIN TUMOURS

- ✦ A brain tumour can be benign (not cancer) or malignant (cancer). It can also be a primary tumour, arising in the brain itself, or a secondary tumour, spread from another part of the body.
- ✦ In benign brain tumours, if the tumour can be removed successfully it should not cause any further problems. However, a small proportion regrow slowly and these recurrences can usually be removed, when necessary, by a further operation.

Queensland^{1,2}

- ✦ 340 Queenslanders were diagnosed with brain cancer in 2016 (the most recent figures available).
- ✦ 282 Queenslanders died from brain cancer in 2016.
- ✦ On average, people diagnosed with brain cancer were 25 per cent as likely to live for another five years compared to the general population.

Trends in Queensland²

- ✦ Brain cancer incidence and mortality rates were stable for both males and females from 1982-2016.

Detection and symptoms³

- ✦ The effects of a brain tumour are varied and usually depend on the type of tumour, the size and its location in the brain.
- ✦ Tumours may cause:
 - Direct pressure which affects brain cells;
 - Shifting of the brain due to the tumour growth; or
 - Pressure which affects brain areas distant from the tumour, causing changes in their function.
- ✦ Several generalised symptoms could be experienced which may include:
 - Headaches – often worse when you wake up.
 - Nausea and vomiting – often worse in the morning or after changing position.
 - Irritability and confusion.
 - Blurred or double vision.
 - Seizures (fits) – can be obvious, involving a loss of consciousness, or more subtle, such as ‘zoning out.’
 - Weakness in parts of the body.
 - Drowsiness – a later symptom.

¹ Queensland Cancer Register, 2019. Unpublished data (1982-2016).

² Queensland Cancer Statistics On-Line, 2019. Viertel Cancer Research Centre, Cancer Council Queensland (qcsol.cancerqld.org.au). Based on data released by the Queensland Cancer Register (1982-2016; released July 2019).

³ Understanding brain tumours, Cancer Council, April 2018 (<https://cancerqld.org.au/content/resources/library/understanding%20brain%20tumours.pdf>)

Risk factors

The cause of brain tumours is not known. However, there are known risk factors associated with brain tumours:

- Family history – In rare cases, a fault in the genes, usually passed down from one parent, can increase the risk of developing a brain tumour. For example, some people have a genetic condition called neurofibromatosis which can lead to tumours of the neurons.
- Radiation therapy – In rare cases, people who have had radiation therapy to the head, particularly to treat childhood leukaemia may be at an increased risk of developing a tumour

Prevention

There are no proven measures to prevent brain tumours. Cancer Council Queensland recommends that to reduce your overall cancer risk you; quit smoking, maintain a healthy body weight, eat a healthy diet, be physically active, stay SunSmart, limit alcohol, participate in cancer screening programs (if eligible) and report unusual changes to your doctor immediately.

Information and Support

Cancer Council 13 11 20

Being diagnosed with cancer or supporting a loved one can leave you with many questions. We want to help you find the answers. Call Cancer Council 13 11 20 Information and Support line to talk with one of the team.

Our team can provide you with cancer information, emotional and practical support. We can also refer you to Cancer Council Queensland's support programs and services.

This confidential service is available Monday to Friday 9am-5pm (excluding public holidays).

Cancer Connect

Cancer Connect is a confidential telephone-based peer support service that connects you, your carer or loved ones with a peer support volunteer who has had a similar cancer experience. You can be matched with a Cancer Connect volunteer based on cancer diagnosis, treatment, family or work issues.

Cancer Counselling Service

Living with a cancer diagnosis, or supporting someone along the way, is rarely easy. Talking things through with a counsellor or psychologist can help you manage your cancer related concerns.

Our Cancer Counselling Service is available for anyone distressed by cancer at any stage. We are a telephone-based counselling service, with face to face appointments available in some regional offices. Our team included nurse counsellors and psychologists trained and experienced in helping people affected by cancer.

For further information and support, please call Cancer Council 13 11 20

Disclaimer: The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for advice from a properly qualified medical professional who can advise you about your own individual medical needs. It is not intended to constitute medical advice and is provided for general information purposes only. Information on cancer, including the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer, is constantly being updated and revised by medical professionals and the research community.

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