



## FACT SHEET

# What is a Brain Tumour?

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Our bodies are constantly making new cells to enable us to grow and to replace worn-out cells. Normally cells grow and multiply in an orderly way, but sometimes something goes wrong with this process and cells grow in an uncontrolled way. These cells may grow into a tumour / cancer.

A brain tumour is a collection of cells that grows out of control from the normal cell mechanisms. Tumours can also be called a cancer, neoplasm, growth, mass or lesion.

Primary Brain Tumours develop and generally remain in the brain.

Secondary Brain Tumours or Metastatic Brain Tumours develop elsewhere in the body and spread to the brain.

Malignant Brain Tumours grow rapidly and invasively.

Benign Brain Tumours generally do not grow rapidly, however can be life threatening.

### Grades of Brain Tumours

- Brain Tumours are graded on a scale of I to IV based on how quickly they are growing, as well as their ability to invade nearby tissue.
- Grades I and II are the slowest growing tumours. Grades IV are the fastest growing tumours.

### How common are they?

In NSW every year 450 people are diagnosed with malignant brain tumours.

### Causes of Brain Tumours

The causes of brain tumours are not known. Doctors can rarely explain why one person gets a brain tumour and another does not.



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#### Symptoms

Symptoms vary depending on what part of the brain the tumour is located. Some common symptoms include:-

- Headaches
- Nausea and vomiting
- Difficulty speaking or remembering words
- Disturbed vision, hearing, smell or taste
- Weakness or paralysis in parts of the body
- Loss of balance
- General irritability, drowsiness or a change in personality
- Seizures

#### Diagnosis

Diagnosis is usually made after your doctor takes a detailed history of the symptoms and performs a thorough examination. Also a CT scan and/or a MRI scan assists in diagnosis of a brain tumour.