

# Children's Brain Tumours

## Information and support for parents and others

### **Introduction**

**Brain Tumours** are the most common solid tumour in children.

There are different kinds and grades of brain tumour.

Sometimes they may be described as benign or **low-grade**.

Others will be diagnosed as **high-grade**.

Some are curable but others may come back at some point.

### **Symptoms may include:**

- Vomiting
- Headaches
- Clumsy movements
- Difficulties in walking
- Epileptic fits
- Sleepiness
- Squinting or other eye problems
- Ringing or buzzing in the ears
- Weakness on one side of the body
- Dizziness
- Problems with memory
- Difficulties with speaking, understanding or writing.

### **Diagnosis**

As well as a neurological examination in the hospital several other tests are commonly used to make a diagnosis. These include:-

**CT SCANS** which combine an X-ray machine with a computer. A special dye is usually injected into the child's vein beforehand. This makes abnormal brain cells easier to see.

**MRI SCANS** also give clear pictures of the brain. They do not use X-rays but radio waves. They provide clearer pictures than CT scans in some parts of the brain.

**EEG** tests are often used to record electrical activity in the child's brain using electrodes attached to the scalp.

**BIOPSY** may be performed to make an accurate diagnosis of the type of tumour. This is an operation under anaesthetic where a very small hole is made in the skull and a piece of tumour is removed for analysis.

## **Treatments may include:-**

### **Surgery**

Depending on the position of the tumour it may be possible to remove most or all of it by surgery. However, it is too risky to operate on some brain tumours.

### **Chemotherapy**

This is used to help kill the tumour or to delay its recurrence. Some brain tumours will stop growing and others may shrink with this treatment. There are many different kinds of chemotherapy and more than one may be prescribed. Very young children are often given chemotherapy instead of radiotherapy because it is considered to be safer.

### **Radiotherapy**

There are various types of radiotherapy but the most common one lasts for several weeks. The aim is to destroy tumour cells as they are growing so radiotherapy is often prescribed for high grade tumours which grow quickly.

BTA's Paediatric (Children) sub-committee members all have children with a brain tumour. They have helped to produce this leaflet.

**If you would like to know more or just feel like a chat please get in touch – at BTA we're all here to help each other. For ways of contacting us visit the contact us page on the website.**