



OSCAR's
PAEDIATRIC
BRAIN TUMOUR
CHARITY

LEARN THE SIGNS OF CHILDHOOD BRAIN TUMOURS

This leaflet aims to provide you with information about the signs and symptoms of brain tumours in children. Earlier detection can make a significant difference in a child's journey to recovery.

OSCAR's Paediatric Brain Tumour Charity exists to support and care for children with brain tumours and their families, fund research and raise awareness of signs and symptoms.

The charity is named after nine-year-old Oscar Hughes, who died from a brain tumour. Oscar was a sporty child, full of humour and energy. One weekend he seemed very quiet and incredibly drowsy - the first indication to his parents that something wasn't right.





Many of these signs and symptoms are similar to those for other childhood illnesses and can be explained away easily.

At OSCAR's, we hear too many stories of children whose symptoms have been dismissed as something less serious.

As parents, we would never want to think the unimaginable, but if you spot some of these signs then please seek the advice of medical professionals.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

These will depend on the size of the tumour, where it is and how it affects that part of the brain. General symptoms can include:

Headaches

which are often worse in the morning

Fits (seizures)

Vomiting

or feeling sick (usually in the morning)

Behaviour changes

such as irritable or loss of interest

Eye problems

such as abnormal movements, blurring or double vision

Feeling very tired

much more quickly than usual or extremely sleepy for no reason

Balance

or co-ordination problems

It's important to remember that many of these symptoms are extremely common. One by itself is rarely a sign of a brain tumour. However, being aware means you are ready to take action if two or more symptoms are experienced at the same time.

Below, you will find further information on signs to look out for depending on your child's age. Please don't be overwhelmed by all the information; just keep it for reference.



Here are some of the key symptoms by age group, to help you notice potential behaviours and changes in your child depending on their age.

BABIES AND TODDLERS

At a young age, children will not be able to describe how they feel, so you need to look out for signs that they are unwell from how they look or behave. Here are some specific things to look out for at this age:

Frequent and unexplained vomiting

especially when not accompanied by diarrhoea or a high temperature

Increasing head circumference

if growth isn't in line with height and weight or there is noticeable bulging or swelling

Irritability / excessive crying

particularly if it is a change from your child's typical behaviour

Balance / co-ordination / walking problems

or any loss or reduction in motor skills - your baby may revert to cruising or crawling

Developmental delays

such as difficulty holding the head up, rolling over, sitting, or not reaching height and weight goals

Visual abnormalities

such as squints, misalignment, bulging, wobbling, quivering or flickering

Vision problems

including reduced awareness of what is around them or bumping into things when they weren't before

Behaviour change, particularly lethargy

consistently and over days or weeks across all situations

Seizures or fits (not with a fever)

whether a brief absence, or jerking / twitching of limbs or the whole body

Abnormal head position

such as a stiff neck, unusual head tilt or difficulties turning their head

Reduced consciousness

where they may be less responsive or not easily roused

Frequent urination or extreme thirst

shown by large volumes of urine, often shown by leaking nappies, and extra demands for drinks

Here are some of the key symptoms by age group, to help you notice potential behaviours and changes in your child depending on their age.

YOUNG CHILDREN

Some young children will not be able to describe exactly how they feel, so you may need to look out for signs that they are unwell from how they look or behave – like going off their food or holding their head or neck.

Persistent / recurrent headache

particularly when waking up, disrupting daily activities

Speech and language difficulties

such as slurred speech or new difficulty finding or spelling words when talking, writing or texting

Balance / co-ordination / walking problems

like clumsiness or a loss of learned skills like handwriting, tying shoelaces, or computer games

Persistent / recurring vomiting

especially when not accompanied by diarrhoea or a high temperature

Visual abnormalities

such as squints, misalignment, bulging, wobbling, quivering or flickering

Blurred or double vision / loss of vision

or reduced awareness of their surroundings, starting to squint or closing one eye to see better

Behaviour change,

which may include increased irritability, difficulty concentrating, or a loss of interest in hobbies

Seizures or fits (not with a fever)

whether a brief absence, or jerking / twitching of limbs or the whole body

Abnormal head position

such as a stiff neck, unusual head tilt or difficulties turning their head

Reduced consciousness

where they may be less responsive or not easily roused

Frequent urination or excessive thirst

shown by constant need for drinks, or to urinate more often, increased accidents or bed wetting

Abnormal growth

when your child isn't growing as they should be for their age



OLDER CHILDREN & TEENAGERS

At this age, your child may not feel comfortable discussing how they feel, so you may need to look out for signs that they are unwell from how they look or behave. As well, many changes are happening to your child at this stage of their life that can be attributed to puberty, but do still be aware. **Please refer to the signs and symptoms above plus any sign of delayed or arrested puberty.**

“ I SUSPECT BRAIN TUMOUR SYMPTOMS IN MY CHILD. WHAT DO I DO NOW? ”

Stay informed, trust your instincts and take action for your child's health. No-one knows them better than you.

If your child shows one symptom, book an appointment with your GP as soon as possible.

If they're experiencing two or more symptoms, request an urgent referral to a consultant.

If symptoms are severe or occur suddenly, take your child to an emergency department or call 999.

Talk to your child's doctor

Doctor's appointments are short.
Record the signs you have seen before you go. Explain your concern that it could be a brain tumour.
Make notes of what they say and plan to do. Let us know the outcome if you need further advice.

Visit the optician

If your child is having vision problems, book an eye test with an optician. Issues with vision are likely to be an eye problem in the vast majority of cases, but it's important to check.

Get support

Childhood brain tumours are a frightening experience. However, with early detection, appropriate care and a supportive network, the journey can be more manageable. We're here to help. Access resources at **oscarspbtc.org** to find out more about what to expect.