



Radiation Treatment Overview - Brain



During treatment, side effects MAY include:

Common:

- Mild to moderate fatigue that can last weeks or months
- Hair loss on your entire head or a small area, depending on the area treated (hair loss may take months to grow back or may be permanent)
- Red and dry scalp
- Ear and/or ear canal pain and irritation

Less Common:

- Headaches
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dry mouth or taste changes
- Seizures or other symptoms caused by the tumour may become worse

After treatment, side effects MAY include:

Common:

- Mild to moderate fatigue that can last weeks or months
- Hair loss on your entire head or a small area, depending on the area treated (hair loss may take months to grow back or may be permanent)

Less Common:

- Decreased hormone levels from the pituitary or thyroid gland (may affect your energy level or metabolism and may require medication to treat)
- Decrease in mental function such as changes in short-term memory and/or ability to concentrate
- Behaviour changes
- Cataracts
- Hearing loss
- Dry mouth or taste changes
- Short-term changes in smell

Rare but can be serious:

- Severe changes in thinking (may affect your daily activities or ability to take care of yourself)
- Loss of vision caused by radiation injury (to the eyes or nerves of the eyes)
- Stroke-like brain injury (radiation necrosis) that may cause weakness or speech problems
- Risk of injury to any part of the body that has received radiation (may be serious, require major surgery and could be life threatening)
- A new cancer caused by the radiation in the future (very low risk)

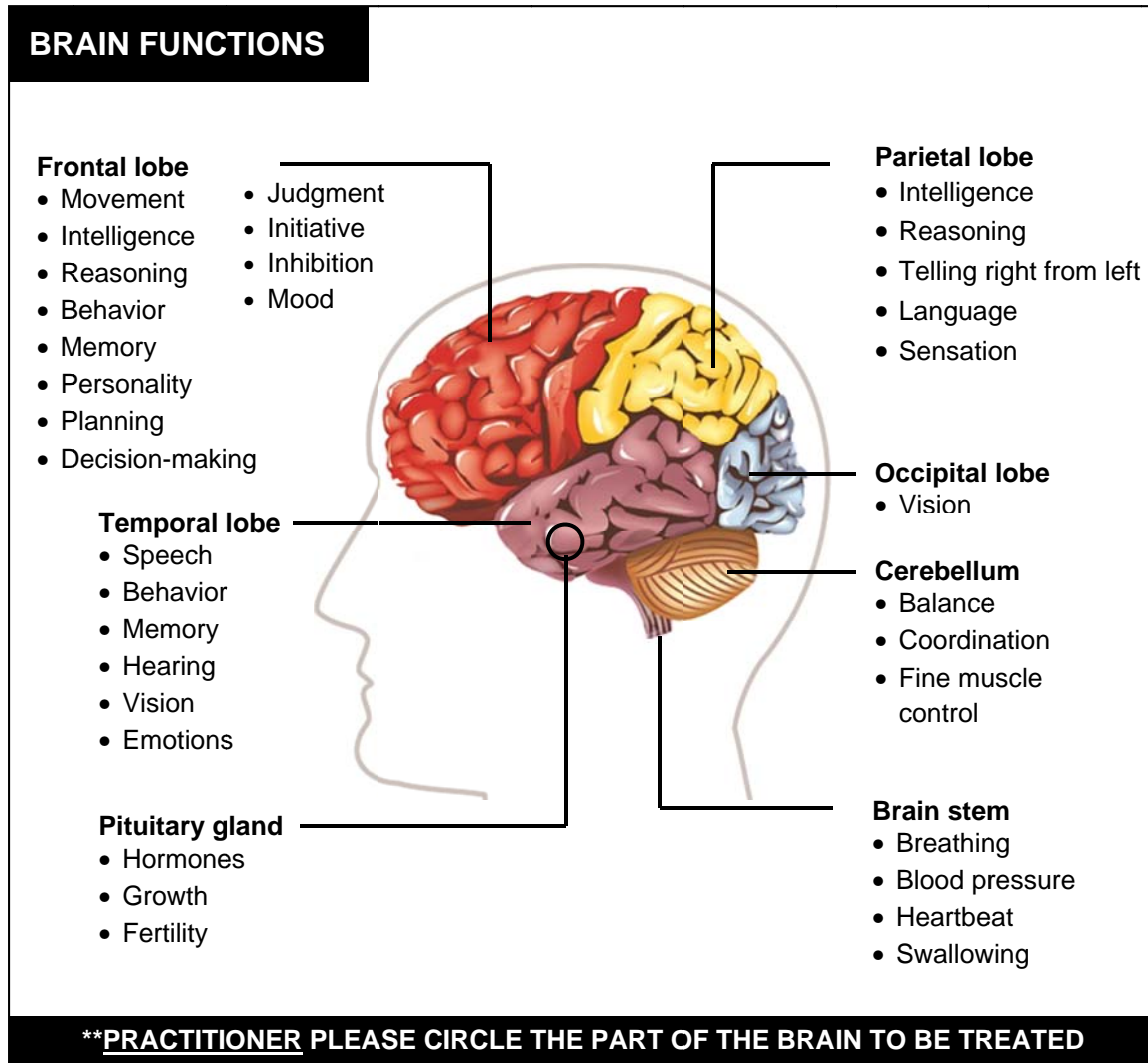
The severity of these side effects will be different from person to person. If you are having chemotherapy during your radiation treatments, side effects may be worse.

When you begin your radiation treatments, the radiation therapists will give you information to help you manage your side effects. You will also be able to meet with your radiation doctor during your treatments to talk about any side effects that you may have.



This list may not all apply to your radiation treatment. Please speak to your radiation doctor to understand what to expect from your treatment.

It is also important to know that how you feel and act during your treatment has a lot to do with where the cancer is or was in your brain. The following image shows a brain and its functions. See which part of the brain you are having treatment on and the type of function it does.



Commonly used medications when you have radiation treatment to your brain

Steroid Medications

- Decadron™ /dexamethasone is the steroid that is usually used.
- Steroids decrease symptoms from swelling inside the brain. Swelling is caused by the brain tumour or radiation treatment.
- It is important to make gradual changes in the steroids. Do not stop these medications suddenly.
- The dose of your steroid medication may need to be adjusted by your doctor (during or after radiation treatment).
- Common side effects of steroids include:
 - Increased appetite and weight gain
 - Facial swelling
- Possible side effects of steroids include:
 - Weakened muscles
 - Higher blood sugar or existing diabetes that becomes worse. If you have diabetes, make sure you monitor your sugar levels closely.
 - Thrush (fungal infection) of the mouth
 - Mood change or agitation
 - Insomnia or trouble sleeping
 - Indigestion

Antacid stomach medications

- Zantac™/Ranitidine™ or Losec™/Omeprazole™ is normally used when you take steroid medication.
- These help control an upset stomach from steroid medication.
- The dose of the antacid medication usually does not change even if the steroid dose is changed.

Anticonvulsant and anti-seizure medication

- Commonly used:
 - Dilantin™/phenytoin
 - Valproate™/valproic acid or Tegretol™/ Carbamazepine™
 - Phenobarbital™/Phenobarb™
- Helps control seizures (partial or generalized)

It is important to take these drugs on a regular basis and to have the level of the drug in the body checked with blood tests to make sure the dose of medication is correct.

My medications are:

Speak with your pharmacist, nurse or doctor if you have questions about your medication.