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For additional Information Sheets or to learn more about other brain tumour topics, visit www.BrainTumour.ca

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada Information Sheets are provided as an informational and educational tool and are not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute for medical care. We urge you to seek specific medical advice on individual matters of concern.

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada is generously supported by individuals, corporations and employee groups. It is through the tireless dedication of donors that help is available for anyone affected by a brain tumour, including patients, survivors and their loved ones.

Ask the Expert Information Sheet

Making the Transition: Your Child's Return to School

By: *Dr. Sharon Guger*

School is a big part of a child's life and plays an important part in returning to a normal routine during and after brain tumour treatment. Attending school can help children feel good about themselves and hopeful for the future. Some children with brain tumours may find it difficult to go back to school, especially if they have experienced changes to their body like hair loss, weight loss or gain, or changes in mobility. Frequent or extended absence from the classroom can also disrupt the learning process and a child with a brain tumour may face the additional challenge of physical changes in the structure of the brain, which can affect their learning.

To help with the transition back to school, one key thing to remember is to have information available for school staff. Your child may be the first student with a brain tumour to attend their school, and staff will appreciate any information that can help them support your child. Here are a few more suggestions to help prepare for the transition:

- Ask your clinic nurse or physician for a letter providing details about your child's medical condition and any relevant information that is important for educators to know (e.g., physical problems/mobility issues, medications, etc.). Be sure to make enough copies for all the school staff involved in your child's wellbeing -- principal, teachers and school nurses.
- If your child has had a neuropsychological assessment, consider giving a copy to teaching staff so they can help your child at school. Neuropsychological testing measures cognitive skills (memory, learning, attention and language), motor skills and social skills. Once a child's educational needs have been identified, educators can create an action plan, also known as an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), to ensure that these needs are met. The IEP details teaching adaptations and learning strategies that capitalize on your child's strengths and support his weaknesses. For example, some children with brain tumours struggle to concentrate with the many noises that can be present in a classroom, and they may need supports (e.g., having your child sit at the front of the classroom).
- Once your child has returned to school, keep in touch with your child's teacher to not only see how they are doing in schoolwork, but also how they are doing socially. Some children may be more emotional than before their diagnosis, while others may become more quiet and withdrawn.

... continued on Page 2

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Additional support, information and education offered by Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada:

Adult, Pediatric and Non-Malignant Brain Tumour Handbook available in English and French

“A Friend in Hope” children’s storybook available in English and French

20+ Adult Support Groups across Canada (in-person and virtual)

Toll-free information and support line

BrainWAVE Pediatric Support Program

Print BrainStorm Newsletter
Email Newsletters:

- E-BrainStorm
- Peace of Mind

“Grey Matters” Blog

All patient resources are available free-of-charge in Canada. Call 1-800-265-5106 or visit www.BrainTumour.ca for additional details and information.

- Before your child returns to class, let teaching staff know that there may be a change in appearance, so that they can let classmates know ahead of time. In so doing, the teacher and your child’s classmates can discuss ways to support your child upon their return. Children who feel they have more support from classmates are less likely to feel sad or worried.

Educators are not the only ones who can benefit from information; don’t forget about your child’s fellow students. An information session can teach your child’s classmates about brain tumours and help create a supportive environment. During sessions like this, classmates can learn about your child’s condition and ask any questions. Be sure to ask your child what he wants others to know. Some hospitals have a school liaison nurse or social worker who can come and meet with staff and classmates.

Together, parents, educators and classmates can help your child find their place back to their second home: their school.



Dr. Sharon Guger is a pediatric neuropsychologist who works in the Oncology Aftercare Program at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Ontario. Dr. Guger’s research interests include neuro-cognitive and socio-emotional late effects of pediatric brain tumours, and developing initiatives to promote transition from pediatric to adult health care settings. The Aftercare Program provides follow-up care to meet the unique health care needs of childhood cancer survivors. The program’s goal is to protect health and promote quality of life through ongoing monitoring and treatment for potential medical, learning, and emotional or social problems.



205 Horton St E
Suite 203
London, Ontario
N6B 1K7

📞 519.642.7755
1 [800] 265.5106
📞 519.642.7192
www.braintumour.ca

