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## Symptoms and time to diagnosis in children with brain tumours.

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### Abstract

**INTRODUCTION:** Clinical symptoms in brain tumours in children are variable at onset and diagnosis is often delayed. Symptoms were investigated with regard to brain tumour localisation, prediagnostic symptomatic intervals and malignancy.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS:** Clinical data from children aged 0-17 years from Southern Denmark were analysed retrospectively and the results were correlated with data on prehospital symptoms obtained from interviews with parents and general practitioners.

**RESULTS:** A total of 55 children diagnosed during a period of five years were identified and 31 interviews were obtained. A total of 19 (41%) of the tumours were supratentorial hemispheric and midline and 27 (59%) were infratentorial. At supratentorial localisations, 42% experienced vomiting as their first symptom followed by seizures in 37% and headache in 31%. At infratentorial localisations, headache occurred in 62%, vomiting in 55% and ataxia in 48% of the cases. The prediagnostic symptomatic interval had a median duration of 30 days with vomiting (range 3-330 days), a median of 75 days with headache (5-730 days) and a median of 75 days with ataxia (1-730 days).

**CONCLUSION:** Diagnosis is often late in relation to the presenting symptoms. An earlier diagnosis may be achieved if a brain tumour is considered as soon as any child presents with the relevant symptoms.

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