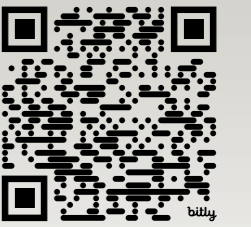


Childhood Brain Cancer



Childhood brain cancer is the leading disease-related cause of death in children, with a young life lost every 11 days. Brain cancer and its treatments cause severe physical and mental impacts, and significantly impact a student's life, academics, social interactions, and overall wellbeing, as well as their family as a whole.



Health condition

- Symptoms can include
 - vomiting
 - dizziness
 - loss of balance
 - headaches
 - seizures
- Often difficult to diagnose (e.g., headaches may not always appear)
- Treatments (e.g., chemotherapy, radiotherapy) take a harsh toll on the body



Student population

No specific data available for *school-aged* students with brain cancer

131 children diagnosed with brain cancer in 2021 and **129 in 2024**

Around **35 children die** from brain cancer each year in Australia

“Dainere wanted to continue learning. She wanted that normalcy of having schooling in her life. I think that being able to attend school or have some form of way to do schoolwork is very important, because there is just that drive to be themselves still and not be the diagnosis.”



School absence patterns

- Students experience long periods of full-time absence from school
- Students are treated in major, capital city hospitals, which may be a long way from home
- When returning, students may only manage partial school days due to fatigue
- No specific data available on average duration of absence



Challenges for students

- Concentration difficulties, hearing loss, handwriting changes
- Feelings defined by their diagnosis, facing stigma
- Delays in developmental skills due to missed experiences
- Attention and concentration problems
- Disruption of friendships and difficulty forming and maintaining relationships
- Academic under-achievement
- Specific learning needs
- Reduced opportunities for social support



Challenges for families

- Families may feel isolated, with little initial or ongoing support
- Parents juggle logistics and intense stress
- Uncomfortable and stigmatising – responses from the public can add distress and emotional strain
- Siblings may feel anxious, isolated, helpless and guilty



What schools should know

- Students often wish to continue studies and extracurricular activities
- Support student as a person, not as a brain cancer patient
- School plays a critical role in maintaining the student's academic, social engagement and sense of normalcy
- Communicate openly with families
- Provide adjustments (e.g. flexible scheduling, two-way digital connections) to allow the student to participate in school when unable to attend in person and to account for missed school time, and cognitive challenges
- Enlarging text (for vision or reading difficulties) or simplifying layout can reduce strain
- Use a microphone/FM transmitter in class if hearing is affected
- Encourage open conversations amongst peers to reduce stigma (e.g., brain cancer is not contagious)
- Be aware of impact on siblings in school and acknowledge siblings' emotional needs



Dainere's Rainbow

Dainere Anthony died of brain cancer at 15 years old. Dainere's Rainbow funds vital research and supports children with brain cancer and their families.