

Date 4 September 2026
Your Ref
Our Ref 11805

Enquiries to Richard Mutch
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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – BRAIN TUMOURS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to brain tumours and dietary advice.

Question:

1. First, are patients that are diagnosed with brain tumours within your NHS Board area given any brain tumour-specific dietary advice while undergoing treatment/management for their condition? If so, what is this advice?

Answer:

Children with brain tumours are seen at presentation, similar to all paediatric oncology and haematology patients, and given initial supportive dietary advice in line with their clinical presentation, nutritional status and treatment plan. Anticipated side effects of the treatment are discussed and how these may affect their oral intake and appetite, taking into account their specific treatment plan. Anticipated nutritional support required may be discussed. Food safety dietary advice during neutropenia is also given but this is generic to any child receiving chemotherapy.

Adult patients diagnosed with brain tumours are not given any brain tumour specific dietary advice. If referred to the dietitian they are assessed and given initial supportive dietary advice in line with their clinical presentation, nutritional status and treatment plan. Any anticipated side effects of the treatment are discussed and how these may affect their oral intake and appetite.

Question:

2. Second, are patients that are diagnosed with brain tumours within your NHS Board area given any brain tumour-specific dietary advice that recommends a ketogenic (very low carbohydrate, high fat) approach?

Answer:

Ketogenic diets are not recommended, or supported, owing to the lack of clinical evidence in their use in the paediatric brain tumour population. There are concerns with the restricted nature of diet, tolerability, weight loss, GI upset, the effect it may have on body composition and safety of the diet.

No, ketogenic diets are not recommended for adult patients with brain tumours.

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhslothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing
Cc: Chief Executive