

# Disturbed body image after CNS cancer

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(Medical Xpress)—Survivors of cancer of the central nervous system (CNS) in childhood are at heightened risk for disturbance in body image and self-image in relation to sports or other physical activities, according to a nationwide study from Karolinska Institutet published in the *Journal of Neuro-Oncology*.

"The need for [preventive measures](#), extended aftercare and psychosocial rehabilitation is clearly demonstrated in these patients," says Dr Krister K Boman, one of the researchers involved in the study. "Our findings show how CNS cancer affects not only health and function, but also fundamental aspects of identity linked to the body and [physical performance](#)."

The study is based on a follow-up of some 700 [adult patients](#) who survived CNS tumours as children, whose health, disabilities, body-image, and self-esteem in relation to sport and physical activities were measured by self-rating and a standardised multidimensional method.

Body image and self-esteem in sports/physical activity was found to be linked in various ways with [study participants](#) current health and functional status. Persistent speech and [vision impairments](#), pain, and emotional 'late effects' (adverse side effects of illness and therapy that appear after treatment), were all associated with a negative body/self-image.

The relationship between late effects and patients' self-image was also shown to be gender-related. Women, who generally suffered from more

serious health complications, had a more negative body and self-image in sports/physical activity.

"We don't yet have a full understanding of the causes of these gender differences, but knowledge of the importance of the health-related late effects and the gender-related differences is an important step forwards," says Dr Boman. "It means that, in future, we will be able to organise preventive healthcare measures and extended remedial interventions for patients with heightened risk for disturbances in self-identity."

According to the researchers, the results confirm the need for an advanced clinical follow-up plan that includes adulthood, focusing on both the physical and psychological late effects of childhood CNS tumours.

**More information:** Boman, L. et al. Disability, body image and sports/physical activity in adult survivors of childhood CNS tumors: population-based outcomes from a cohort study,

*Journal of Neuro-Oncology*, online first January 2013.

[link.springer.com/article/10.1 ... 07/s11060-012-1039-5](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11060-012-1039-5)

Provided by Karolinska Institutet

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