

A guide for patients following gamma knife radiosurgery for a pituitary tumour

How will I feel after treatment?

It is normal for you to feel tired after gamma knife radiosurgery. You may also have some discomfort at the points where the frame was held in place. It is possible you may feel sick or have a tension headache that can last for a day or so but this is rare.

Will I lose my hair?

No.

Is there anything I should or shouldn't do?

It is important that you don't scratch the scabs over the pin sites as they act as a barrier to infection and should fall off of their own accord within a few days. For this reason you shouldn't wash your hair for several days after the procedure.

Don't use any types of creams or lotions on the pin sites. If your head is sore after leaving the hospital you can take over-the-counter painkillers. Always read the patient information that comes with your medicine and if you have any questions, ask your pharmacist for advice.

If you notice pain, swelling or an increase in redness at the pin sites, see your GP immediately.

When can I go back to work?

Whether or not you have any side effects and how you feel will determine when you can go back to work. Gamma knife surgery is non-invasive and has few side effects compared to open surgery. You can return to your usual routine as soon as you feel well enough. You may be well enough to go back to work the next day however most people find that they need a few days rest before they return to work.

When will it be safe to fly?

There should be no reason why you can't fly the day after your surgery.

Are there any complications?

As the tumour is close to your optic system, there is a very small risk you will have some disturbance to your vision after treatment.

The dose of radiation that your pituitary gland will receive during gamma knife surgery may affect your hormone levels. You may have a hormonal deficiency even several years after the radiosurgery and you may require hormone replacement treatment.

Your doctor can give you more information about possible complications and symptoms you may have.

When will I know gamma knife radiosurgery has had an effect?

The aim of gamma knife radiosurgery for a pituitary tumour is to stop further growth of the tumour.

If your tumour produces too much of any of the pituitary hormones your hormone levels will be monitored. You will know if the treatment has worked when the hormone levels return to normal, which can take up to two years. Your doctor will give you details but it is usual to have follow-up appointments, with an MRI scan and blood tests, every six months. Depending on your circumstances you may need to have hormone and visual field checks more frequently than this. These will generally be done by your endocrinologist and ophthalmologist.

If you have a tumour that doesn't produce hormones then you will be monitored by MRI scans after one, two, three, five, seven and ten years. You will know the treatment has been effective if, after several years, the tumour has remained the same size or shrunk.

When should I see my doctor?

Your doctor will advise you when he or she needs to see you for follow-up appointments. Your follow-up appointment is scheduled for:

..... at

Contact

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact your doctor, or the gamma knife centre Monday to Friday, between 9.00am and 5.30pm.

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- f: +44 (0)20 7460 5940
- e: gamma.knife@cromwellhospital.com
- w: bupacromwellhospital.com/services-and-specialties/gamma-knife-centre

Further information

The Pituitary Foundation is a national UK charity which provides information and support for those living with pituitary disorders.

- t: +44(0)117 370 1320
- e: helpline@pituitary.org.uk
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