

## A guide for patients following gamma knife radiosurgery for arteriovenous malformations

### 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?

It is uncommon for people who have gamma knife surgery to lose their hair. This is because the radiosurgery is directed to a specific area and doesn't usually damage healthy tissue. You may lose a patch of hair if the area targeted is near the surface of your skull. If you do have hair loss, it will probably grow back within three months. It may grow back lighter and finer but you won't usually lose all your hair.

### 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.

It's important in the few hours after your angiography that you don't over-exert yourself and cause bleeding from the angiography puncture site. If you notice a sudden swelling where you had the angiography puncture, apply gentle pressure and seek medical help.

### 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 side effects?

Side effects after gamma knife radiosurgery for AVMs are rare. However, in the process of reducing the risk of future bleeding, the gamma knife radiosurgery may cause some swelling around the AVM. Very occasionally this can result in temporary neurological side effects. The nature of these side effects will depend on the location of the AVM in your brain.

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

The aim of gamma knife radiosurgery is to close the AVM in order to prevent further bleeding. It takes approximately two to three years before it's possible to know if the gamma knife surgery has been successful. At this stage you will have an angiogram to assess whether the AVM is gone. If small remnants of it still exist after three years then your doctor may consider further gamma knife treatment.

Your doctor will give you details but it is usual to have a follow-up appointment, with an MRI scan at one, two and three years after gamma knife radiosurgery. A follow-up angiogram will also be carried out as required.

**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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**Further information**

The AVM Support Group provides information and support for patients diagnosed with arteriovenous malformations.

w: [www.avmsupport.co.uk](http://www.avmsupport.co.uk)

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