

## A guide for patients following gamma knife radiosurgery for an acoustic neuroma

### 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. People who have gamma knife surgery for an acoustic neuroma do not lose their 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 treatment. 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 are able to 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?

Complications of gamma knife surgery are rare and are related to the size and location of the tumour. Possible complications include facial muscle weakness, facial numbness, and problems with balance. 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 surgery for an acoustic neuroma is to stop further growth of the tumour. In some cases the acoustic neuroma shrinks slightly after the procedure but the outcome can be positive even if this doesn't happen. The majority of small to moderate sized acoustic neuromas do not need any further treatment after gamma knife surgery.

Hearing loss is a natural feature of acoustic neuromas and the aim of gamma knife surgery is to prevent this loss. Two published studies give evidence that gamma knife surgery is successful in preserving the hearing of 60-70% of people who have hearing prior to the treatment. This is significantly better than the outcome among those who do not have treatment. However, these results also mean that for 30-40% of people a deterioration in hearing cannot be avoided despite gamma knife surgery. This is unavoidable due to the way in which acoustic neuromas naturally develop; it is not a result of any complications from the gamma knife radiosurgery.

Your doctor will give you details but it is usual to have a follow-up appointment, with an MRI scan, at one, two, three, five, seven and ten years after gamma knife surgery.

### 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

British Acoustic Neuroma Association (BANA) provides information and support for patients diagnosed with acoustic neuromas.

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