

UCLH
NHS Foundation Trust



Patient Guide to Gamma Knife Radiosurgery for Pituitary Tumours

at The Queen Square Radiosurgery Centre



Gamma Knife Radiosurgery for Pituitary Tumours



This booklet provides brief information about Gamma Knife radiosurgery for Pituitary Tumours which we hope you will find useful.

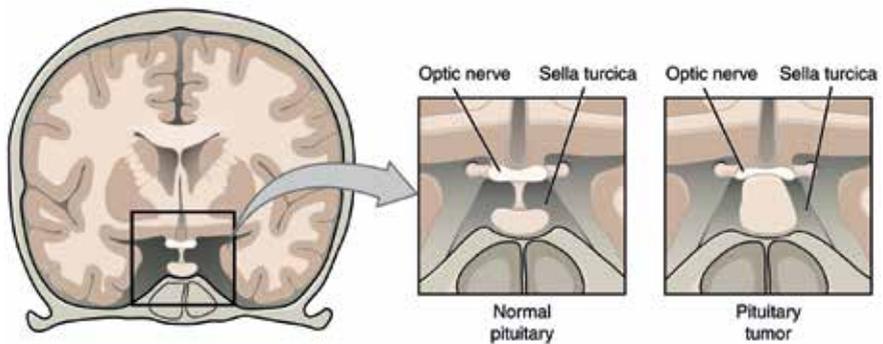
Further information is also available on our website and from charities who can provide you with support. Details can be found on page 12. We encourage you to read the information before attending your outpatient appointment enabling you to raise any questions you may have.



What are Pituitary Tumours?

Pituitary tumours are abnormal growths that develop in your pituitary gland. There are several forms and the majority of them are benign. Less than 1% are cancerous.

The pituitary gland is known as the “master” gland of the body and secretes hormones to regulate growth and control most of the other hormone based systems in the body.



Some pituitary tumours result in too many of the hormones that regulate important functions of your body. Others can cause your pituitary gland to produce lower levels of hormones.

The gland is found on the base of the skull in the centre of the head and is in close proximity to the optic nerves.

As the tumour grows it can cause visual problems as it presses on the nerve.

What are the treatment options for pituitary tumours?

There are various options for treating pituitary tumours, including removing the tumour, controlling its growth and managing your hormone levels with medications. Treatment depends on the type of tumour, its size and location. Your age and overall health also are factors.

Surgery

The most common form of surgery used to remove the tumour is a transphenoidal resection. This usually enables your doctor to remove the tumour through your nose and sinuses without an external incision. Large tumours may be difficult to remove this way and the operation may be performed by way of a craniotomy, opening of the skull, although this route is rarely used now.

Drug Therapy

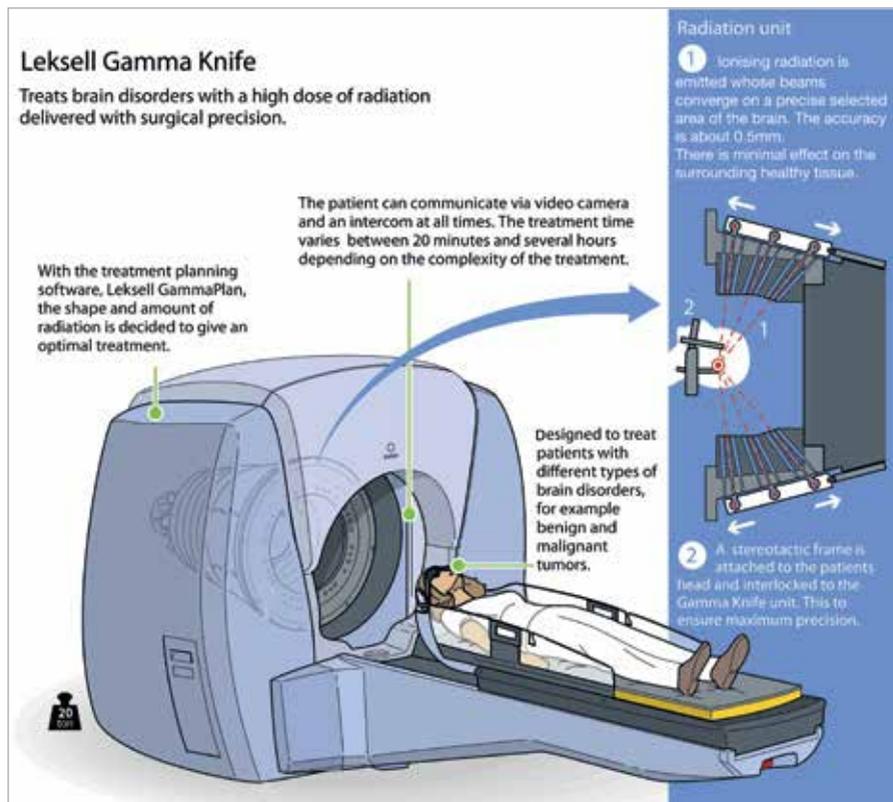
Certain pituitary adenomas (hormone producing tumours) can be controlled using drugs and this will have been discussed with you by your endocrinologist. Tumours that do not secrete hormones cannot be treated this way.

Radiotherapy

Traditional radiotherapy uses high-energy X-rays to destroy tumours. It can be used after surgery or alone if surgery isn't an option. Radiation therapy can be beneficial if a tumour persists or returns after surgery and causes signs and symptoms that medications don't relieve.

Treatment with Gamma Knife Radiosurgery

Gamma Knife Radiosurgery is a well established method of treating pituitary tumours. This is not a knife in the conventional sense and the treatment does not involve anything being cut. This will be discussed further in this information leaflet.



How does the Gamma Knife work?

The Gamma Knife works by focussing beams of gamma radiation and has the ability to treat a defined target area with minimal effect on surrounding tissue. Gamma Knife Radiosurgery is used exclusively for the brain.

What are the steps before treatment?

To If you have been referred for Gamma Knife radiosurgery your case will be reviewed by our specialist multi-disciplinary team (MDT). This includes neurosurgeons, neuro-oncologists, neuroradiologists, medical physicists and radiographers who will determine if Gamma Knife Radiosurgery is a suitable treatment for you.

If suitable you will then be invited to an outpatient appointment with a consultant and to attend a pre-assessment clinic led by radiographers.

You may have had some of your questions answered by your referring Consultant. You may also have had information from other sources (GP, Internet, other patients etc) which may need to be put into context. Indeed you may have had contact with our office and received some answers from our staff.

We must seek your consent for any procedure or treatment beforehand. We will explain the risks, benefits and alternatives where relevant before asking for your consent. If you are unsure about any aspect of the procedure or treatment proposed, please do not hesitate to ask for more information.

You will be shown around where treatment will be undertaken and meet with one of the medical staff, who will take your history, check you for general medical problems and determine any specific requirements to ensure that the treatment day goes smoothly. Some blood tests may be required in preparation for treatment day. We would then plan your admission for treatment.

Things to consider:

Write down two or three of your most important questions

- List or bring all your medicines and pills – including vitamins and supplements.
- Ask for an interpreter or communication support if needed.
- Ask a friend or family member to come with you, if you like.

During your appointment

- Don't be afraid to ask if you don't understand.
- If you don't understand any words, ask for them to be written down and explained.
- Write things down, or ask a family member or friend to take notes.

Before you leave your appointment

Check:

- You've covered everything on your list
- You've understood what will happen next
- You know who to contact with any concerns or questions

Risks of Gamma Knife Radiosurgery

As with every procedure, there are some risks associated with Gamma Knife Radiosurgery. In order to make an informed decision and give your consent, you need to be aware of the possible side effects of this procedure and that you will be exposed to radiation. The consultant will talk to you about the potential risks and side effects of Gamma Knife Radiosurgery for your individual circumstances at your outpatient appointment.

What will happen on treatment day?

You are welcome to have somebody to accompany you all day if this would make you feel more comfortable.

Typically patients are admitted on the morning of treatment, however some, dependent on clinical needs, may be admitted the evening before and this will be discussed with you at your outpatient appointment.

We need to target the area to be treated precisely. To guide us, we use a lightweight metal head frame that allows us to accurately pinpoint the target to be treated in your brain. It also prevents your head from moving during imaging and treatment procedures. For some patients, according to clinical needs the frame may be replaced by a mask¹.

The frame fitting involves a small degree of discomfort, but most patients tolerate it remarkably well. The application of the head frame requires four small injections to administer local anaesthetic (similar to having a dental treatment) in order to numb the sites where the 4 pins are to be used to secure the frame.

The whole procedure takes about 5 - 10 minutes during which you may experience some minor discomfort from the wearing of the head frame but will quickly get used to this. You will have the frame attached until treatment is completed, as all measurements are taken from this reference.

You will then be taken to the MRI scanner to have images taken. Once your scan is complete, you will be taken to the Gamma Knife centre where you can have light refreshments and a rest.

¹If a mask is being used the treatment day remains the same as described but reference to frame fitting/removal is not relevant. Further information on treatment using a mask will be provided at your outpatient appointment.

During your rest time, the medical physicist and a consultant neuroradiologist uses a specially designed computer system to calculate a precise and accurate treatment plan based upon your scans.



This treatment plan is unique to you as every patient's plan is individually designed to address the specific medical condition. Once complete, your Consultant reviews and accepts this plan and prescribes your treatment.

The treatment is similar to having a scan, and you will be lying down with your head frame supported to ensure that you are sufficiently still. During the treatment you will be awake and be able to communicate with the treatment team through an audio and video connection. If necessary, breaks can be introduced into the treatment process to ensure your comfort whilst you are treated.



Following treatment we will remove the frame, clean the points where it was attached and allow you time to recover. You may feel tired or even have a headache that afternoon as a result of the frame application and the long and busy day. Typically you will be discharged home the same day but some patients do stay on a ward and are discharged the next morning. The treatment day remains the same

as described but reference to frame fitting/removal is not relevant. Further information on treatment using a mask will be provided at your outpatient appointment.

We will follow up on your progress working with the consultant who referred you to us. This will be discussed and explained to you following your treatment and your consultant will inform you about when he/she would like to see you again. They will also write to your GP, giving them details of your treatment and after care.

Your questions answered

Q: What do I feel during the treatment?

A: The frame, which at this point will still be attached to your head, will be positioned and fixed within the Gamma Knife. For you the treatment will be similar to having another scan. You will lie on a couch, listen to music and will feel no pain. Claustrophobic patients may find the confined space difficult but the space is less confined than the MRI scanner. We have an intercom system so it is possible to talk to the radiographers at any time.

Q: Are there any side effects and complications?

A: Side effects can vary greatly between individuals. The rare complications of the radiation treatment are usually delayed and the consultant will discuss these with you in more detail when you are seen in clinic. From the procedure itself apart from the effects of the local anaesthetic used for the frame application most patients will have no immediate side effects. You may have a headache by the end of the treatment day, mainly due to the frame and some nausea may occur during the first 48 hours. Rarely, some patients may feel tired for a few days or may experience temporary mild discomfort or numbness at the pins fixation sites.

Q: How will I feel after treatment?

A: Radiosurgery does not leave you “radioactive” in any way and you are free to resume contact with children and pregnant women after leaving the treatment room. Over the next few days you may feel tired and you may feel some discomfort in the areas where the frame was fitted. Mild painkillers may be taken if you experience this.

Q: After treatment is there anything I should or shouldn't do?

- Do not scratch the scabs over the pin sites as they act as a barrier to infection and should fall off in a few days. Also, for the same reason you should refrain from washing your hair for the next 3-4 days
- Do not use any types of creams or lotions on the pin sites
- Do take mild painkiller for headache or soreness
- Do contact your GP if you find the pin sites becoming more painful, red or swollen
- Do contact us if you have any concern or unanswered questions

Q: Will I lose my hair?

A: For treatment of pituitary tumours this would be extremely rare and would usually grow back within 3 months.

Q: When can I resume my normal routine?

A: As soon as you feel well enough. This can be the next day after treatment or you can wait a few days.

Q: When can I go back to work?

A: The same as above applies to returning to work, although most people choose to take a few days rest before going back.

Q: When will it be safe to fly?

A: If you have a holiday booked, there is no reason why you can't fly because of radiosurgery.

Q: Can a mask be used instead of a frame?

A: For only some patients according to clinical needs and suitability. Most treatments continue to be undertaken using the frame.

If you have any queries or problems please contact us. Details are on the inside back cover.

Patient feedback

Your complete satisfaction is very important to us and we kindly ask all patients to provide feedback via a questionnaire sent a few days after treatment.

Sometimes, we may not meet your expectations and if there is something we need to improve, please tell us. If we cannot resolve your issue immediately then you can make a formal complaint and a leaflet explaining how is available at the centre and further information is available on our website.

We ensure complaints are investigated fully and learn from them to avoid re-occurrence.

For further information you can:

Refer to our website: www.queenssquaregammaknife.co.uk

Other sources of useful information and support are available from The Pituitary Foundation Support Helpline 0117 370 1320

Web: <https://www.pituitary.org.uk/>

The Queen Square Radiosurgery Centre
The National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery
Queen Square, London WC1N 3BG

Tel: 020 3448 4077
Fax: 020 3448 4078
email: uclh.infogkqs@nhs.net
www.queensquaregammaknife.co.uk

DIRECTIONS:

By Rail: Euston, King's Cross and St Pancras are all only about 15 minutes walk from the hospital.

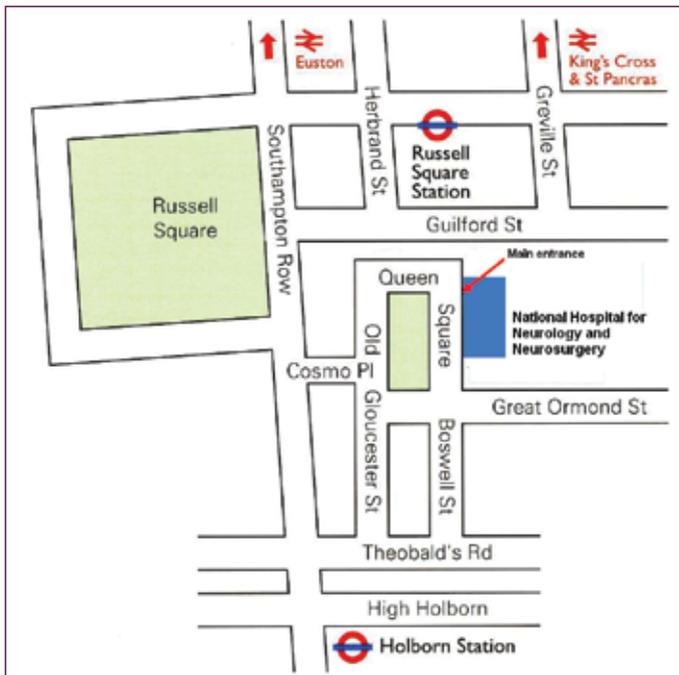
By Bus: Southampton Row - no's 59, 68, 91, 168, 188, 501

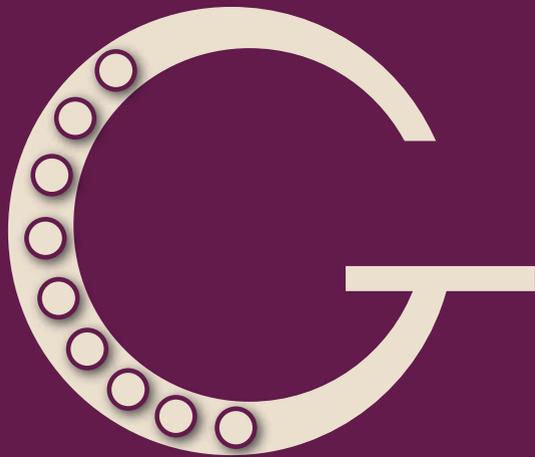
Theobalds Road - no's 19, 38, 55, 243

High Holborn / New Oxford Street - no's 8, 25, 242, 501, 521

By Tube - Nearest tube stations:

Russell Square (Piccadilly Line), Holborn (Central and Piccadilly Lines). Both within walking distance





www.queensquaregammaknife.co.uk