

Patient information factsheet

Stereotactic radiosurgery/radiotherapy

This factsheet explains what to expect at your stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS) or stereotactic radiotherapy (SRT) appointments. It aims to answer some of the initial questions you are likely to have but if you would like more information or have any concerns, please speak to a member of your healthcare team who will be pleased to advise you.

What is stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS) or stereotactic radiotherapy (SRT)?

It is a non-invasive procedure used to treat tumours affecting the brain, which aims to achieve similar results as surgery. Because no surgical incision is required, there is no long healing process, meaning you should be able to continue with your normal activities soon after receiving treatment.

Treatment is delivered using a specialist radiotherapy machine, which directs high energy x-rays to small, focused areas of the brain. It works by damaging the cancer cells' DNA (division and growth mechanism), with the aim of preventing the cells from multiplying and dividing, therefore causing the tumour to stop growing, shrink or die.

Treatment is delivered in either a single session (SRS), or for up to five days (SRT) – with both treatment options often referred to as SRST. Your doctor will decide which option is appropriate for you.

Before your stereotactic radiosurgery/therapy

You will have an appointment to meet the team who will be looking after you. They will be able to discuss with you in more detail what will happen during the treatment.

Once the procedure and any possible risks and side effects have been explained, you will be asked to sign a consent form saying you agree to have the treatment. Please feel free to ask questions if you're unsure about anything.

You may be prescribed a course of oral steroids to take before you start treatment. If you are already taking them, your dose may be increased.

SRST planning

To enable us to deliver the treatment accurately, your head must remain completely still during the procedure. Therefore, before your SRST treatment you'll attend a planning appointment where we'll make you a plastic mask which will be used to hold your head and neck in position during treatment. The mask is designed so that you can breathe normally. You may also be required to have a mouthpiece to help keep you in position. Your team will decide which method will be best in your case. The mask and mouthpiece will not hurt and both can be easily removed.

You should not cut your hair after your mask has been made as this could alter its fit. If you have a beard or moustache, you may be required to shave it off to ensure the mask fits correctly.

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Once the mask has been made for you, you will have a CT scan while wearing it. You will also have an MRI. The images from these scans will help us plan your treatment.

Your specialist radiographer will explain the process to you, and ensure you know where you need to be and when.

What to expect when you come for treatment

The amount of time between planning scans and treatment will vary for each person.

You will need between one and five treatment sessions, depending on your doctor's recommendation.

Your appointment is likely to be in the morning and will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour. You may be in the department for a few hours however, so you may wish to have someone accompany you.

SRST is completely painless though you are likely to hear a buzzing noise from the machine. You will be on your own in the treatment room, but the radiographers will be watching you on television monitors at all times and can come in to you quickly if needed.

We may ask you to remain in the department for a while after the treatment for monitoring before you can go home.

Most patients feel completely fine after treatment, and you can continue to eat and drink normally. Please note however that **you must not drive**. Your team will discuss this with you in more detail at your appointment.

Side effects

It's possible you may experience some side effects after treatment.

The skin in the area may become slightly red for some days afterwards, and you may experience some patchy hair loss although this will, for most patients, grow back. You may also feel slightly faint or dizzy following treatment, or have a headache. The treatment can make you feel quite tired, which often continues for several days.

Any specific side effects relating to your individual treatment will be discussed with you. If you are at all concerned or worried about side effects, please contact a member of your team.

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Who to contact if you have concerns

If you have urgent symptoms relating to your current radiotherapy treatment, please call the acute oncology service at Southampton General Hospital on **07867 973649**. This number is answered 24-hours, seven days a week, but is only for treatment-related symptoms and not for general queries such as rearranging appointments or hospital transport, for example.

If your symptoms are not urgent, you can speak to one of the radiographers when you attend for your radiotherapy treatment.

In an emergency call **999**.

You can also use the following telephone numbers to contact a member of staff directly:

Radiotherapy reception – **023 8120 8568**.

SRS advanced practitioner – **07766 726773** (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm). If you reach the answer phone please leave a message so that we can return your call.

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.