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Ocular Melanoma

Fact Sheet

There is an urgent need to increase awareness and improve the diagnosis and treatment of ocular melanoma

GENERAL INFO

- Melanoma is a cancer that begins in the melanocytes, the pigment producing cells in the body.
- Melanoma can occur on the skin, in the digestive tract, in the spinal cord, in the eye and even in the genitals.
- Ocular (uveal) melanoma, or melanoma of the eye, is the most common form of eye cancer in adults.
- Unlike cutaneous melanoma, or melanoma of the skin, ocular melanoma is not thought to be related to sun exposure.
- The uveal tract is the pigmented layer of the eye that includes the iris, ciliary body and the choroid.



KEY FACTS

- Approximately 200 Canadians are diagnosed with ocular melanoma each year.
- Ocular melanoma comprises approximately 5 - 12% of all melanoma and is most commonly diagnosed around 55 years of age.
- Ocular melanoma can develop in anyone – no matter their age, gender, skin colour, or race.
- Risk factors for ocular melanoma include light skin, light hair, light eyes and there is a slight male prevalence.



SYMPTOMS

- Symptoms of ocular melanoma include bulging eyes, change in colour, poor vision, or red, painful eye, but some people do not have any noticeable symptoms.

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the way**





DIAGNOSIS

- Most ocular melanomas are diagnosed by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist during a dilated eye exam, making regular dilated eye exams very important.
- Eye tumours should be treated by an ophthalmologist who specializes in treating ocular melanoma.



TREATMENT

- Small and medium sized ocular melanomas can be treated with radiation (plaque/proton beam).
- Removal of the eye, or enucleation, is often the best option for a large tumour.



TAKE ACTION

- Health care is a provincial responsibility in Canada, check your cancer agency website for updates.
- You have to be your own best advocate – educate yourself and ask questions.



PROGNOSIS

- Ocular melanoma metastasizes, or spreads, to other organs in the body in about half of all cases - when ocular melanoma spreads, it most commonly spreads to the liver.
- Before the primary tumour is treated, it is possible to have a biopsy to determine your risk of developing metastatic disease.
- Currently, there is no known cure for metastatic ocular melanoma.
- Median survival after clinical detection of ocular melanoma metastasis is approximately 9 months – but treatments are in development, so ask your doctor about your options.



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