

Ocular melanoma (eye cancer)



Your ophthalmologist has found a melanoma in your eye. Here is some information to understand this disease and feel less anxious.

What is ocular melanoma?

A rare tumour of the eye, which forms in cells called melanocytes. Melanocytes give eyes their colour. They're found mainly in the iris (the coloured part of the eye) and in the choroid, one of the eye layers. Melanoma can also develop in other parts of the eye.

Is this a serious disease?

Melanoma is a form of cancer. It can create metastases - cancer cells that spread to other parts of the body. Treatment for melanoma of the eye can reduce the risk of the cancer spreading.

What are the causes and risk factors for this form of cancer ?

The exact cause of eye cancer is still unknown. Certain factors can increase the risk, including having fair skin and light eyes, as well as the presence of irregular beauty spots (moles) on the white part of the eye.

However, prolonged exposure to the sun or a computer screen, or eye trauma, are not recognized as causes for this form of cancer.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Most people with eye cancer do not observe any changes in their vision. The tumour is often discovered by chance, for example during a routine eye examination. Some people notice that they're not seeing quite so well or have blurred vision. However, those symptoms may indicate another eye problem. Even when there are signs, the patient may not notice them. Also, tumours often develop slowly, so the eye has time to get used to the tumour and vision adapts.

This is why it's so important to have your vision checked by your optometrist on a regular basis.



Melanoma of the eye is often discovered by chance, for example because a person has a vision disorder.

What tests are performed to detect eye cancer?

Various tests are used to detect tumours and determine their characteristics. Your ophthalmologist will decide which tests are needed to make the diagnosis.

REGULAR TESTS	PURPOSE
Eye exam (visual acuity)	Assess the quality of your vision
Slit-lamp test with ophthalmoscope	Observe eye structures and measure pressure
Eye ultrasound	Confirm presence and size of tumour
Retinal photography	Look at the tumour and aside tissues to see how far the cancer has advanced

COMPLEMENTARY TESTS	PURPOSE
Blood test	Evaluate liver function to screen for metastases in the liver
Lung X-ray	Screen for metastases in the lungs
MRI, Eye scan	Look inside and around the eye to plan treatment
Abdominal ultrasound	Screen for metastases in the liver

How is the treatment decision made?

Treatment depends on the size of the tumour as well as its shape and position in the eye. Your treatment will be chosen based on the observations made by the ophthalmologistoncologist and the test results.

The specialist will recommend that you have one of these 3 treatments.

- 1 Radioactive plaque:** iinstalling a radioactive plaque (iodine or ruthenium) on the eye (eyeball).
- 2 Stereotactic radiation therapy:** radiation treatments using external rays.
- 3 Enucleation:** removal (ablation) of the eye.



Should someone come with me?

Yes, you should come accompanied to all your exams and treatments. It is very important because your vision may be blurred for a while afterward.

Who should I ask for help or answers to my questions?

The pivot nurse in ocular oncology will be your resource person throughout your follow-up. Feel free to share your questions or concerns. You can reach the pivot nurse from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday:
> **514 890-8000, ext. 26782**

A nurse is also available to answer your questions in the ophthalmology clinic. Call between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday:
> **514 890-8278**



RESSOURCES UTILES

Canadian Cancer Society:

- > **cancer.ca**
- > **1 888 939-3333**

Eye Cancer Network:

- > **eyecancer.com**

Virage :

- > **viragecancer.org**
- > **514 890-8000, poste 28139**

Quebec Cancer Foundation:

- > **fqc.qc.ca**
- > **1 800 363-0063**

Maison Jacques-Cantin, Canadian Cancer Society:

- > **1 888 939-3333**

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site
chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
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Questions

Write down any questions you want to ask your care team so you don't forget anything.



Lined area for writing questions



Observations - Comments

Write down observations you feel are important: your symptoms, treatments, follow-up, energy level, spirit, etc.



Lined area for writing observations and comments



Upcoming appointments

Lined area for writing upcoming appointments

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