

Ocular Melanoma Fact Sheet

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

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

Risk factors for ocular melanoma include light skin, light hair, light eyes and there is a slight male prevalence

The uveal tract is the pigmented layer of the eye that includes the iris, ciliary body and the choroid

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

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

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

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

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

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

This document was created with the permission of CureOM, an initiative of Melanoma Research Foundation www.cureOM.org

Ocumel Canada
1-800-460-5832
ocumelcanada.ca
ocumelcanada@saveyourskin.ca



All references can be found on the Melanoma Research Foundation website at www.melanoma.org