

Choroidal Melanoma

This material will help you understand choroidal melanoma and how it is treated.

What is choroidal melanoma?

Choroidal melanoma is a type cancer of the eye. It affects the choroid, a layer of blood vessels in the eye. In the early stages, most people with choroidal melanoma do not have any symptoms. In later stages, symptoms may include:

- Blurred vision
- Flashes
- Floaters
- Retinal detachment

What causes choroidal melanoma?

Choroidal melanoma starts from melanocytes in the choroid. Melanocytes are a type of cell that give color to hair, skin, and eyes. When these cells clump together, they form a growth that can become cancerous. The exact reason why a growth becomes cancerous is unknown. It is thought to be related to gene structure and the type of tissue. Choroidal melanoma is most common in people with fair skin, blonde or red hair, and blue or green eyes.

How is choroidal melanoma diagnosed?

Choroidal melanoma can be diagnosed during your routine eye exam. As part of the exam, the black area in the center of your eye, called the pupil, is dilated. This lets your doctor look at the back of your eyes and see the melanoma. Your doctor will examine the area carefully and may do other eye tests to confirm

your diagnoses. These tests may include ultrasound, photographs, fluorescein angiogram and OCT.

It can be difficult to tell the difference between small melanomas and a nevus, or harmless growth. Because of this, your doctor may decide to monitor you regularly before diagnosing you with choroidal melanoma.

How is choroidal melanoma treated?

Treatment depends on the size of the melanoma. If your melanoma is small, your doctor may recommend laser or plaque therapy. Plaque therapy is a type of radiation therapy that involves stitching a small gold carrier (like a tiny bottle cap) to the wall of the eye. The carrier has radioactive seeds that can destroy or stop tumors from growing. Once the tumor is destroyed, the carrier can be removed. For larger melanomas, treatment may require removing the eye. The eye removal procedure is known as enucleation.

What are the complications of choroidal melanoma treatments?

Plaque treatment is a form of radiotherapy which can affect your eye's normal tissue, as well as the tumor. This may result in decreased or loss of vision, new vessel formation or increased eye pressure. In severe cases, the eye might need to be removed. There are some new treatments using medications such as Avastin or Lucentis and laser treatments that can help prevent and treat the side effects of radiation. There is a possibility that a choroidal melanoma can spread cancer to other parts of the body. Talk to your doctor if you are concerned about your prognosis.

What is the chance that my melanoma will spread?

It is possible that your choroidal melanoma may spread (metastasize) to other areas of your body. For this reason, you will have systemic work up that

includes a chest x-ray and CT of the liver prior to treatment. For further follow up, you may have a test that involves taking a biopsy (sample) of your tumor tissue. This biopsy is taken at the same time as your plaque treatment or enucleation. The tissue is then sent to a lab to be tested. Your tumor will be placed into one of three classes:

- **Class 1A:** There is a low risk that your cancer spread. Your eye doctor will likely ask that you come in for a yearly follow-up.
- **Class 1B:** You have a slightly higher risk of your cancer spreading than those in Class 1A, but are still considered to be at low risk. To be on the safe side, your doctor will want to monitor you more closely and may order bloodwork and/or imaging tests such as X-ray, ultrasound, CT or MRI scans.
- **Class 2:** There is a high risk of your cancer spreading. You will likely meet with a medical oncologist and have check-ups with your eye doctor every 3-6 months. Your monitoring plan will be more intense and include CT or MRI scans, liver function tests, and chest X-rays every 3 months.

Based on your test results, you and your doctor will discuss the monitoring and treatment plan that is best for you.

For more information, scan this code with your smartphone or visit the website listed.



<http://www.kellogg.umich.edu/patientcare/conditions/uveal.melanoma.html>

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