

Ocular Melanoma Fact Sheet

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



IT'S A FACT!

- 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
- It is estimated that 77,000 Americans will be diagnosed with melanoma in 2013, resulting in 9,500 deaths
- 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 2,000 Americans 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 color or race
- Symptoms of ocular melanoma include bulging eyes, change in color, 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
- Eye tumors should be treated by an ophthalmologist who specializes in treating ocular melanoma
- Small and medium sized ocular melanomas can be treated with radiation
- Removal of the eye, or enucleation, is often the best option for a large tumor
- 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
- Tumors in the eye are often more resistant than tumors on the skin once they have spread
- Before the primary tumor 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
- You have to be your own best advocate – educate yourself and ask questions
- 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

All references can be found on the MRF's website at www.melanoma.org

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