

Ocular Melanoma Fact Sheet

THERE IS AN URGENT NEED TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND IMPROVE THE DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF OCULAR MELANOMA.

KNOW THE FACTS

- Ocular melanoma (OM), or melanoma of the eye, is the most common form of eye cancer in adults.
- Melanoma is a cancer that begins in the melanocytes (pigment cells) in the body.
- Approximately **2,000 Americans** are diagnosed with OM each year.
- Unlike cutaneous (skin) melanoma, ocular melanoma is **not thought to be related to UV exposure**.
- OM makes up about 5% of all melanoma cases and is most commonly diagnosed around 55 years of age.
- Melanoma of the eye includes **uveal melanoma** and **conjunctival melanoma**
- The uvea is made up of three parts:
 - The **choroid** is beneath the retina.
 - The **iris** is the front, colored part of the eye.
 - The **ciliary body** is in the back of the eye.
- The conjunctiva is the clear covering of the white part of the eye.
- OM does not discriminate based on age, gender, skin color or race.
- Risk factors for OM include **light skin, light hair and light eyes**. There is a slight male prevalence.
- Symptoms of OM can include bulging eyes, change in color, poor vision, red/painful eyes, but some people have no noticeable symptoms.
- Most OMs are diagnosed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist during a **dilated eye exam**.
- Small and medium-sized tumors can be treated with radiation. Removal of the eye (enucleation) is often the best option for a large tumor.
- **OM metastasizes (spreads) in about half of all cases**, most commonly to the liver.
- Tumors in the eye are often more resistant to treatment 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 OM.
- Median survival after a metastatic OM diagnosis is 9 months – but **treatments are being researched in clinical trials**.

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