

## Conjunctival Melanomas Ocular Melanomas

Conjunctival melanoma is a rare cancer of the conjunctiva, the mucous membrane lining of the eyelid. While melanoma is most commonly found on the skin, it can also occur inside the eye as well as on the surface of the eye and eyelids.



### What are the signs & symptoms?

Conjunctival melanomas usually develop as a pigmented (dark) area on the conjunctiva. The cancer may also arise from a freckle or nevus on the conjunctiva or can appear on healthy tissue.

### How is conjunctival melanoma diagnosed?

This type of melanoma can be diagnosed with an eye examination. A diagnosis is confirmed by performing a biopsy - removal of cells or tissue from a tumor for testing purposes.

### What is the treatment for conjunctival melanoma?

The melanoma is surgically removed followed by cryotherapy - the use of extreme cold to destroy cancer cells. Good vision is often preserved in the affected eye. Sometimes topical chemotherapy is used after surgery to prevent the melanoma from coming back.

### Can conjunctival melanoma recur (come back)?

Conjunctival melanomas have a tendency to come back locally (on the surface of the eye) and often require removal of the affected areas of the eye or tissue around the eye. Up to 20 percent of patients may develop regional (local) lymph node involvement, usually in the parotid (salivary gland) and neck area.

Because of the risks associated with regional lymph node involvement, there is an on-going clinical trial at MD Anderson to study the role of sentinel lymph node biopsy for this condition. This clinical trial allows for earlier detection of regional lymph node metastasis from this cancer.

## What are the long-term effects of conjunctival melanoma?

- Possible vision impairment
- Metastatic disease (cancer that spreads to other parts of the body)
- Loss of the eye is possible, if the melanoma recurs on the surface of the eye, and can no longer be removed with eye preserving surgery

For more information, please call

### **Ophthalmology Clinic**

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

(713) 792-6523

### **The Learning Center**

The Learning Center is a consumer health library with the latest information on cancer care, support, prevention and general health and wellness issues.

(713) 745-8063, **Theodore N. Law Learning Center - Main Building**

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