



SCEYENCE

Understanding Ocular Melanoma

Although rare, ocular melanoma is one of the most common types of eye cancer in adults, occurring in 5 out of every 1 million adults younger than 50 years of age. In adults older than 50 years, the incidence increases to more than 20 cases per million with each year. Although there are several known risk factors for developing ocular melanoma, there is no known cause.

What Is the Mechanism?

Eye melanoma occurs due to mutations in the DNA of healthy melanocytes in the eye, which influence the ability of cells to regulate growth. Unlike normal cells, mutated cells do not die off. Instead, these cells accumulate in the eye, resulting in cancer. Researchers have yet to determine the exact impact of ultraviolet exposure on ocular melanoma, but some studies suggest it can increase risks for developing the disease.

What Are the Symptoms?

Ocular melanoma can occur without early symptoms, but if they do occur, they may include the following:

- Dark spots on the iris, which may enlarge over time
- Visible eye floaters or flashes of light
- Changes in pupil shape
- Changes in the way the eye looks or moves
- Reductions of peripheral vision in one eye
- Blurred or poor vision in one eye
- Pain in or around the eye

Regular eye exams are the best way to catch ocular melanoma early. If you experience any symptoms, it is important to schedule an appointment with an optometrist to identify the underlying cause of your eye issues.

Who's At Risk?

The exact cause of ocular cancer is not fully understood, but some factors can increase risks for developing it. People at higher risk for developing certain types of cancers—particularly those affecting the skin or the eyes—include the following:

- Fair skin or Caucasian descent
- Light-colored eyes
- Older than 50 years of age
- Strong family history of cancer
- Have certain inherited skin conditions
- Have abnormal eyelid pigmentation or increased pigmentation of the uvea
- Moles or freckles on the skin
- One or more freckles in the eye

Reduce Your Risk

There are some simple lifestyle changes patients can make to reduce their risk of

cancer, including skin cancer and certain types of ocular cancer:

- Wear sunglasses with 100% UVA-UVB lens protection
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat
- Maintain a healthy, balanced diet
- Decrease stress
- Exercise regularly
- Stop smoking or don't start
- Limit alcohol intake

Schedule a Dilated Eye Exam

An important strategy for increasing awareness of ocular melanoma is to schedule a dilated eye exam. If you have any concerns about your risk for ocular melanoma or other eye conditions, you should consult your local optometrist. These specialists can perform a comprehensive eye exam, help assess your risks, and teach you different ways to keep your eyes healthy.





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EYE-DROPS

The mantis shrimp possesses what many consider the most complex eyes in the entire animal kingdom. Humans have three types of color receptors (cones) in their eyes, allowing for trichromatic vision, but a mantis shrimp can have an astonishing twelve to sixteen types of photoreceptors. This means they can perceive a spectrum of color, including ultraviolet and polarized light, far beyond our comprehension. Their specialized eyes, which move independently, also allow for full depth perception with just a single eye.



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INSIGHTS

Lazy Eye: Can Video Games Help?



Lazy eye, or amblyopia, is a disorder that affects visual acuity and typically begins in infancy and early childhood. Lazy eye affects approximately 3% to 5% of children in the United States. Untreated amblyopia can lead to permanent vision problems. The sooner amblyopia is identified, the sooner it can be treated appropriately. In most cases, the condition is treated with corrective lenses, patching, and eye exercises.

More recently, research has suggested that playing video games might also help correct lazy eye. Although conventional treatments of childhood amblyopia continue to be trusted, a specially designed video game has also shown promise.

In a recent 2-week study involving 28 children, investigators found that those who played an iPad game improved amblyopic eye visual acuity by 1.5 lines. Children who were patched improved by 0.7 lines. Another study found that the improvements in best corrected visual activity obtained from iPad games were retained for at least 1 year after treatment.

Video games designed to correct lazy eye are beneficial because they provide long-lasting effects as well as entertainment for children while performing eye exercises.



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