Eye Cancer - Risk Factors

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Risk Factors

A risk factor [2] is anything that increases a person's chance of developing cancer. Although risk factors often influence the development of cancer, most do not directly cause cancer. Some people with several risk factors never develop the disease, while others with no known risk factors do. However, knowing your risk factors and talking about them with your doctor may help you make more informed lifestyle and health care choices.

The following factors can raise a person's risk of developing eye cancer:

Age. People over age 50 are most likely to be diagnosed with primary intraocular melanoma. In fact, the average age of diagnosis is 55. It is rare in children and people over age 70.

Race. Primary intraocular melanoma is more common in white people and less common in black people.

Gender. Intraocular melanoma affects about equal numbers of men and women.

Individual history. People with the following medical conditions have a higher risk of developing primary intraocular melanoma:

- Ocular or oculodermal melanocytosis (pigmentation of the eye or skin around the eye; it is also called nevus of Ota)
- Nevi, or spots like moles in the eye
- Dysplastic nevus syndrome (a condition marked by multiple flat moles that are irregular in shape or color)

Family history. Intraocular melanoma doesn't generally run in families, although a couple of rare cases have been reported.

Other factors. Some studies have suggested that sunlight or certain chemicals may be a risk factor for intraocular melanoma, but the data are not conclusive about this association.

People with a combination of these risk factors may benefit from seeing an ophthalmologist for a yearly examination and protecting their eyes from ultraviolet (UV) radiation with sunglasses. Anyone who finds unusual moles or other skin growths around the eye or elsewhere on the body should see a dermatologist (a doctor specializing in skin diseases), especially if there is a family history of melanoma [3].

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/24868
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/19251