Eye Cancer - Questions to Ask the Doctor

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [1], May / 2012

Questions to Ask the Doctor

Talking often with the doctor is important [2] to make informed decisions about your health care. These suggested questions are a starting point to help you learn more about your cancer care and treatment. You are also encouraged to ask additional questions that are important to you.

General questions:

- What type of eye cancer do I have?
- Where exactly is the tumor located?
- What stage is the cancer? What does this mean?
- Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
- Do you recommend any additional diagnostic tests, such as cytogenetics or gene expression profiling?
- Who can help me interpret the results of this test(s)?
- Do I need treatment right away?
- What experience do you have in treating patients with uveal melanoma?
- What are my treatment options?
- What is the likelihood that the cancer is metastatic?
- What clinical trials are open to me?
- Who will be part of my health care team, and what does each member do?
- Who will be coordinating my overall treatment and follow-up care?
- What treatment plan do you recommend? Why?
- What is the goal of each treatment?
- What are the possible side effects of this treatment, both in the short term and the long term?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
- Could this treatment affect my sex life? If so, how and for how long?
- Could this treatment affect my ability to become pregnant or have children? If so, should I talk with a fertility specialist before cancer treatment begins?
- If I'm worried about managing the costs related to my cancer care, who can help me with these concerns?

For patients who need surgery:

- What type of surgery do you recommend? Why?
- What are the side effects of my surgery?
- Will I need to stay in the hospital for this surgery? For how long?
- Will I have problems with my vision afterwards, either immediately or in the long term?

For patients who need an eye removed:

- How do I adjust to only having one eye?
- How long will it take me to recover physically?
- What rehabilitation services are available?
- How soon can I get a prosthesis (artificial eye)?
- When do I get a permanent prosthesis?
- How do I care for my prosthesis?

For patients who need radiation therapy:

- What kind of radiation therapy will I receive?
- What does the preparation for this treatment involve?
- What is the likelihood of having radiation damage to my eye?
- What is the risk of vision loss?
- What other side effects can I expect from this treatment?
- What can be done to treat the side effects?

After treatment:

- What are the chances that the cancer will return?
- What follow-up tests do I need, and how often do I need them?
- What support services are available to me? To my family?
- Whom do I call for problems?

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/24958