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Lacrimal Gland Tumor - Diagnosis [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2015

ON THIS PAGE: You will find a list of the common tests, procedures, and scans that doctors can use to find out what's wrong and identify the cause of the problem. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

Doctors use many tests to diagnose a tumor and find out if it is cancerous, and if so, if it has spread to another part of the body, called metastasis. Some tests may also determine which treatments may be the most effective. For most types of tumors, a biopsy is the only way to make a definitive diagnosis of cancer.

If a biopsy is not possible, the doctor may suggest other tests that will help make a diagnosis. Imaging tests may be used to find out whether the cancer has spread.

Your doctor may consider these factors when choosing a diagnostic test:

- Age and medical condition
- Type of tumor suspected
- Signs and symptoms
- Previous test results

In addition to a physical examination, the following tests may be used to diagnose a lacrimal gland tumor. Not all tests listed will be used for every person.

- **Biopsy** [3]. A biopsy is the removal of a small amount of tissue for examination under a microscope. Other tests can suggest that cancer is present, but only a biopsy can make a definite diagnosis. The sample removed during the biopsy is analyzed by a pathologist. A pathologist is a doctor who specializes in interpreting laboratory tests and evaluating cells, tissues, and organs to diagnose disease.

The type of biopsy performed depends on the location of the tumor. In an incisional biopsy, the surgeon cuts into the tumor and removes a sample of tissue. In an excisional biopsy, used more commonly for benign mixed epithelial tumors, the surgeon removes the entire tumor. A fine needle biopsy removes a small amount of tissue for examination under a microscope by inserting a needle directly into the tumor to extract cells. The use of fine needle biopsy for a lacrimal gland tumor is controversial. Talk with your doctor for more information.

- **Computed tomography (CT or CAT) scan** [4]. A CT scan creates a three-dimensional picture of the inside of the body with an x-ray machine. A computer then combines these images into a detailed, cross-sectional view that shows any abnormalities or tumors. Sometimes, a special dye called a contrast medium is given before the scan to provide better detail on the image. This dye can be injected into a patient's vein or given as a pill to swallow.
- **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)** [5]. An MRI uses magnetic fields, not x-rays, to produce detailed images of the body. MRI can also be used to measure the tumor's size. A special dye called a contrast medium is given before the scan to create a clearer picture. This dye can be injected into a patient's vein or given as a pill to swallow.
- **Positron emission tomography (PET) scan** [6]. A PET scan is a way to create pictures of organs and tissues inside the body. A small amount of a radioactive sugar substance is injected into the patient's body. This sugar substance is taken up by cells that use the most energy. Because cancer tends to use energy actively, it absorbs more of the radioactive substance. A scanner then detects this substance to produce images of the inside of the body.
- **Bone scan** [7]. A bone scan uses a radioactive tracer to look at the inside of the bones. The tracer is injected into a patient's vein. It collects in areas of the bone and is detected by a special camera. Healthy bone appears gray to the camera, and areas of injury, such as those caused by a tumor, appear dark.

After diagnostic tests are done, your doctor will review all of the results with you. If the diagnosis is a cancerous lacrimal gland tumor, these results also help the doctor describe the cancer; this is called staging.

The [next section in this guide is Stages and Grades](#) [8], and it explains the system doctors use to describe the extent of the disease. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/lacrimal-gland-tumor/diagnosis>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24406>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24486>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24578>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24648>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24410>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/18988>