Printed April 25, 2015 from http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/lacrimal-gland-tumor/diagnosis

# Lacrimal Gland Tumor - Diagnosis [1]

**This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [2], 05/2012**

**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 has metastasized (spread). 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 metastasized. Your doctor may consider these factors when choosing a diagnostic test:

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

In addition to a physical examination, the following tests may be used to diagnose a lacrimal gland tumor:

**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 from the biopsy is analyzed by a pathologist (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 remains 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 contrast medium (a special dye) is injected into a patient's vein to provide better detail.

**Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)** [5]**.** An MRI uses magnetic fields, not x-rays, to produce detailed images of the body. A contrast medium may be injected into a patient's vein to create a clearer picture.

**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 substance is injected into a patient's body. This substance is absorbed mainly by organs and tissues that produce 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 cancer, appear dark.

Learn more about what to expect when having common tests, procedures, and scans [8].

After these diagnostic tests are done, your doctor will review all of the results with you. If the diagnosis is cancer, these results also help the doctor describe the cancer; this is called staging [9]. Learn more about the first steps to take after a diagnosis of cancer [10].

*The next section helps explain the different stages for this type of cancer. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select Stages, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.*

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