

Eyelid Cancers

Skin cancer often involves the skin of the eyelid or adjacent face. Eyelid skin cancers occur most often on the lower eyelid, but may be found anywhere on the eyelid margins, corners of the eye, eyebrow skin, or adjacent areas of the face.

Symptoms

Eyelid cancers usually appear as painless lumps. Occasionally, they may produce scabs, bleeding or ulcers, and can distort the eyelid structure with loss of eyelashes. These changes may require a biopsy to confirm the diagnosis of skin cancer.

Causes

Excessive exposure to sunlight is the single most important factor associated with skin cancers on the eyelids and face.

Fair-skinned people develop skin cancers far more frequently than dark-skinned people.

In some circumstances skin cancers can be hereditary.

Types of Eyelid Cancer

The most common type of cancer around the eyelids and face is the Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC).

BCC's enlarge locally and usually do not spread (metastasize) to distant parts of the body. However, with time, if not completely removed, it will grow and invade adjacent structures.

Other rarer types of eyelid cancer can spread or metastasize to distant parts of the body, and require prompt aggressive treatment

Treatment

The first priority is complete removal of the cancer, and most often requires surgery.

When removing the cancer, it is usually necessary to remove an area of adjacent healthy looking tissue as a "safety-margin" to reduce the risk of recurrence.

Reconstruction of the eyelids is a specialised technique that is tailored to each individual patient according to the defect following removal of the cancer.

In some cases it is necessary to remove the cancer and reconstruct the eyelids on separate days. This is to ensure that the Pathologist is able to examine the cancer specimen microscopically for completeness of excision.

You will be able to discuss the specific individual surgical technique for excision and reconstruction with Mr Ismail prior to surgery.

Whichever technique is used, the aim of surgery is to remove the cancer and reconstruct the eyelids so that they function properly, protect the eye, preserve vision, and has the best cosmetic appearance possible.

Any form of therapy for eyelid skin cancer will leave a scar. However, an effort is always made to minimize scarring and obtain optimal cosmetic results.

Immediately following surgery, your eye will be padded. Mr Ismail will advise how long the eye needs to remain padded and will also prescribe eye drops and ointment for two weeks following the operation. Sometimes it will be necessary to take antibiotic tablets, and these will be prescribed if necessary. For more detailed information on recovery from surgery see Post-operative Eyelid Surgery Instructions.

After surgery, the healing process may take six months to one year, and during this time, any scars will usually become softer and fainter.

Despite complete removal of eyelid cancers, occasionally a recurrence or new cancer may develop. If you are concerned, please contact Mr Ismail for advice.

Private appointments and enquiries

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