

Living with Eye Cancer - A Quick Guide



Contents

This is a brief summary of the information on 'Living with eye cancer' from CancerHelp UK. You will find more detailed information on the website.

In this information there are sections on

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Coping with eye cancer

When you are diagnosed with cancer, it can be very difficult to cope, both practically and emotionally. At first, you are likely to feel very upset, frightened and confused. Or feel that your life is out of your control.

The coping with cancer section of CancerHelp UK contains lots of information you may find helpful. There are sections on

- Your feelings
- Talking to people: who and what to tell
- Talking to children
- How you can help yourself
- Who else can help you

- Sick pay and benefits, and coping financially

Changes in your sight after eye cancer

Eye cancers do not always cause problems with your sight. It will depend on the type of eye cancer you have. The more advanced the cancer, the more likely it is to affect your sight. Problems can range from very minor changes in your vision to complete loss of sight in one eye.

Coping practically with sight changes

Sight changes can affect reading, driving, your work, and how you get around. There is a lot of help available to people with visual problems. You can get speech recorders to record lists or information, talking books, magnifiers, and adaptations for your computer, mobile phone or electronic notepad. You can register as a blind or partially blind person to get help from your local health authority.

If you have had your eyeball removed (enucleation) the main thing you will notice is that it's a lot harder to judge the distance between objects. But you will get used to this and adjust. You'll also find that you



cannot see so well to one side without turning your head.

Losing some or all of your sight can be very distressing and can have a big effect on your life. It often helps to talk to the people close to you about how you are feeling. Or you may prefer to talk to someone who doesn't know you personally. To find out more about counselling, look in the coping with cancer section of CancerHelp UK.

Changes in your appearance after eye cancer

Surgery that involves the eye may change the way you look. But modern surgical techniques and reconstructive surgery means that you are less likely to have much scarring, even with very big operations. With time, many scars will fade and be far less visible. So even though you are aware of them, others may not notice. If you are not happy with how you look, you may be able to have further surgery to help correct this. Talk to your doctor about any worries you have.

Using an artificial eye

If you have had your eye removed this means adjusting to having an artificial eye. Even if other people don't notice it, you are still aware that you look different. The change in appearance can be hard to get used to.

How surgery may affect your self esteem

It can be difficult to accept sudden changes to your looks. It is not unusual for people who have had surgery to their face to feel very angry, confused and upset for some time afterwards. You may feel worried about how your friends and family see you.

It's completely normal to worry about these things. Remember that those people who are most important to you will not view you any differently as a person. They will want to support you as much as they can, so talk to them about how you are feeling.

CancerHelp UK describes several things you can do that may help you cope with changes in your looks. Also, there are a number of organisations and support groups that help people cope with changes in their sight and the way they look.

Changes in your sex life with eye cancer

Any changes in your appearance and sight may make you feel less confident about sex. If you have had an eye removed and have an artificial eye you may worry about how this looks to your partner.

Although others may not notice you have an artificial eye, you know you have. And this can take time to come to terms with. If surgery has affected other parts of your face and you are not happy with how you look, you may be able to have further surgery to help correct this. Talk to your doctor about any worries you have.

If you are able to talk to your partner about your worries, you will both gradually get used to your new situation and things will feel less awkward. There is more about sex after cancer in the coping with cancer section of CancerHelp UK.



What to ask your doctor about living with eye cancer

- How will my treatment affect me?
- Will I ever get back to normal, or will I have some long term effects?
- Will my sight be affected?
- How can I get help with changes in how well I see?
- How will I look after my operation?
- What can be done to hide any scars I may have?
- Will I be able to go back to work?
- Where can I get help with claiming benefits and grants?
- What practical help is available?
- Where can I get help dealing with my feelings?
- Can you refer me for counselling?
- Do I have to pay for counselling?
- Could a Macmillan nurse help me?
- Is there a local support group?

Eye Cancer Organisations

Cancer Research UK
 Main website: www.cancerresearchuk.org
 Patient information website:
<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>
 Cancer Information Nurses phone: 020 7061 8355

Childhood Eye Cancer Trust
 Phone: 020 7377 5578 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)
 Website: www.checht.org.uk
 Email: info@checht.org.uk

The NHS Artificial Eye Service
 Phone: 01253 651131
 Helpline Number: 0845 6050561
 Website: www.naes.nhs.uk
 Email: info@naes.nhs.uk

More information

For more information about eye cancer, visit our website
<http://cancerhelp.cancerresearchuk.org>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. You can view or print the information in a larger size if you need to.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on **0808 800 4040**
 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's Patient Information Website CancerHelp UK in January 2012. CancerHelp UK is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through CancerHelp UK and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. © Cancer Research UK 2012. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464) and in Scotland (SC041666).