

Information for
patients & families

Brachytherapy Treatment of the Eye

Treatment of Uveal Melanoma



Treatment – Radiation

Introduction

This booklet is for eye (ocular) plaque brachytherapy treatment for uveal melanoma. Brachytherapy means “short distance” radiation treatment. This means the radiation source is close to, or inside the tumour. This treatment is done in Calgary and Edmonton.

Who Does My Treatment?

Dr. Ezekiel Weis, Ophthalmologist

MD, MPH, FRCSC, Diplomate ABO, Associate Professor
Oculoplastics, Orbit, and Ocular Oncology

Dr. Ezekiel’s Office Information

Calgary:

Rockyview Hospital — Eye Clinic

4th Floor (Main Level), Fisher Building

7007 14th St, SW, Calgary, AB T2V 1P9

Contact Mon – Fri from 7:30am – 3:30pm

403-943-8531

Edmonton:

Royal Alexandra Hospital — Eye Clinic

Main Level, Room 1111

10240 Kingsway Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5H 3V9

Contact Mon – Fri from 7:00am – 3:00pm

780-735-4932

Write down your locations:

Insertion Location: _____

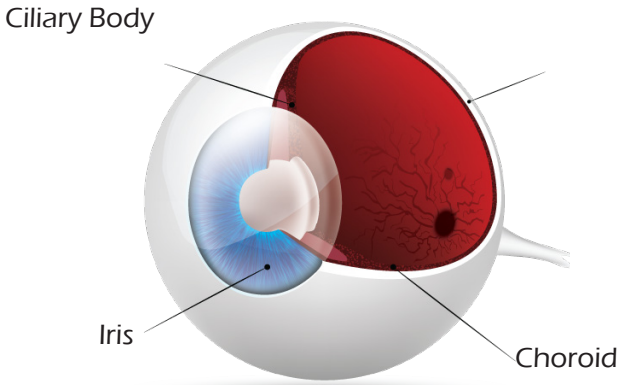
Removal Location: _____

What is uveal melanoma?

Uveal melanoma is the most common cancer that develops inside the eye. The uvea is the middle layer of the eye that includes the:

- Iris
- Ciliary body
- Choroid

Your doctor will talk to you about which area of your eye is affected.



How can uveal melanoma be diagnosed?

- A clinical exam done by an ophthalmologist
- Photographic evaluation — taking pictures of your eye so we can see the growth of the tumour.
- Ultrasound
- Optical coherence tomography — a scan of the layers of the retina and choroid.
- Fluorescein angiography — a dye is injected into your arm and travels through the bloodstream to the eye. As it flows through the eye, it is photographed.

How is uveal melanoma treated?

We use radioactive plaque therapy to destroy the tumour without removing your eye.

Are there side effects?

The tumour and the radiation can cause loss of vision. How much vision loss will depend on where the tumour is in your eye and how big it is. Vision loss from radiation may take years to happen.

How will I get my treatment?

A radioactive eye plaque is attached to your eye in the operating room by your Ophthalmologist and removed after 5–7 days.

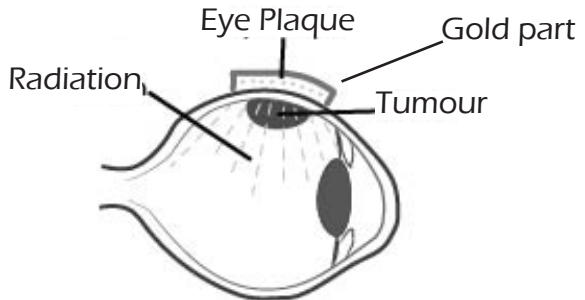
What is a radioactive plaque?

A gold disc with small radioactive Iodine 125® seeds in it.



© AHS

Gold part of the plaque



How is the treatment given?

Your ophthalmologist attaches the eye plaque to the outside of your eye on top of the tumour.

The seeds give off radiation to the tumour. The gold part of the plaque blocks most of the radiation from leaving your eye.

The plaque will stay on your eye for about **5–7 days**.

The plaque is bigger than your tumour, so it will cover the tumour plus a little extra (called a margin).

How long is the treatment?

The radiation starts when the plaque is put onto your eye, and stops when the plaque is removed.

Before Your Procedure

What will happen before my procedure?

You will have an eye examination, including an ultrasound.

Pre-admission Clinic Appointment

You may have:

- blood work, a chest x-ray, ECG
- an anesthesia consult
- a PET scan
- a CT scan
- an education session and consult with a radiation oncologist

What can I do to prepare for my procedure?

- Take a bath or shower the night before or morning of your procedure.
- Bring personal care items such as toothbrush and toothpaste, and any medications you take.
- Do not eat after midnight (12 am) before your procedure. You can drink clear fluids until 5 am.
- Take medications with small sips of water. Do not take blood thinners.

What happens on the insertion day?

We will admit you to the surgical day unit where a nurse will prepare you for your procedure.

- You will change into a gown
- Your blood pressure will be checked
- An intravenous (IV) line will be started
- You will talk with Dr. E. Weis (Ophthalmologist) and the anesthesiologist
- You will be taken to the operating room on a stretcher

Placing the Radioactive Eye Plaque

During Your Procedure

- The anesthesiologist will put you to sleep
- While you are asleep, Dr. E. Weis (ophthalmologist) will place the plaque on your eye

After Your Procedure

You will:

- Wake up in the recovery room with a gauze eye patch taped over your eye.
- Get an envelope with information, prescriptions for pain, and a stool softener.
- Get a pink wallet card with information for emergencies.

Keep the pink card in your wallet while the plaque is on your eye. After the plaque is removed, you do not need to keep it.

The night after your procedure:

- If you live within 90 minutes of Edmonton or Calgary, you may go home.
- If you live more than 90 minutes away, you will need to stay in the area for 1 night.

Will I feel any discomfort?

You may feel some discomfort or itchiness for a few days.

- The amount of discomfort will depend on where the plaque is on your eye.
- Your nurse will give you oral medication — take the medicine if you feel pressure, pain or discomfort.
- If you feel scratchiness or something like sand and gravel, close both your eyes and this feeling will stop.
- **Never** try to touch or remove the plaque from your eye.

Radiation Safety

There are a few things to consider for the next 5–7 days while your plaque is in place.

- Radioactive Iodine 125® seeds give off a low level of radiation that does not travel far.
- It is safe for you to be around other people.
- Children and pregnant women should stay 2 metres (6 feet) away while the plaque is in place.
- After the eye plaque is removed, you are **not radioactive** and you do not need to take precautions.

Removing the Eye Plaque

Before Your Procedure

Do not eat after midnight (12am) before your procedure. You can drink clear fluids until 5am.

- Take medications with sips of water.

At the hospital a nurse will prepare you for your procedure.

- You will change into a gown
- Your blood pressure will be checked
- An intravenous (IV) line will be started
- You will be taken to the operating room on a stretcher

During Your Procedure

- You will be sedated to reduce any anxiety and discomfort. Local anesthetic will be given.
- While you are sedated, your ophthalmologist will remove the plaque from your eye.
- You will be taken to the recovery room.

After Your Procedure

You will wear an eye patch for **1 day**.

- **Do not get your eye patch wet**
- You will get a prescription for antibiotic eye drops and eye ointment, and instructions on how to use them and how to change your eye dressing
- After you finish the prescription eye drops as instructed, buy over-the-counter “artificial tears” and use 4 times a day for 6 months

Important Things to Know

While the plaque is in place (5–7 days):

- Light activities are allowed
- **Minimize bending forward or down**
- **Do not lift anything 10 pounds (lbs) or heavier**
- Take short, slow walks on flat ground everyday
- Try not to raise your blood pressure
- Climb stairs slowly and hold onto a railing
- **Take baths** instead of showers — **do not** get your eye patch wet
- Add more medical tape or replace the eye patch if it becomes loose

Can I drive after both procedures?

Your ophthalmologist or Dr. Weis will talk to you about your situation and your ability to drive.

Emergency Contact Information

Short-Term Side Effects

You may have side effects that include:

- Nausea and fatigue from the anesthetic. Your nurse can give you medication to help with nausea.
- Blurry vision that is temporary.
- A very red and swollen eye for several weeks.
- Feeling like your eye has sand in it. This is caused by the stitches on the surface of your eye. This feeling usually improves within a few days but can last weeks.
- A little blood in your tears for a few days. Gently wash around the eye with a warm, clean washcloth. Try not to allow any crust to form — crust is harder to clean.
- An increase in pain when you move your eyes because the plaque is resting next to the eye muscle.

The radiation treatment **does not**:

- Affect the vision in your other eye
- Cause hair loss or brain damage



For any life-threatening emergency:

Go to the closest emergency room and bring this booklet with you.

For more information on uveal melanoma, visit:


www.ocularoncology.ca

Who to I contact for questions?

Since your surgery is very specialized, you should contact Dr. Weis or his staff for questions or concerns.

We realize we serve a very large area, and seeing a local doctor may be the only reasonable option.

Contact Dr. Weis' Office if:

- 
- You have more than a few drops of blood from your eye
 - You have pain even when you take the pain medication
 - You have a **fever**: 38.3°C (100.9°F) or higher, or 38.0°C (100.4°F) for at least 1 hour (60 min)

Dr. Weis' Office

Monday to Friday from 7:00am – 3:00pm

Edmonton 780-735-4932

Calgary 403-943-8531

For after hours or on the weekend, call:

Edmonton 780-735-4111

Calgary 403-943-3000

Read this to the switchboard operator:



I am Dr. Ezekiel Weis' patient. I have had brachytherapy surgery in the last 3 weeks. He asked me to put the call through to him because I am having a serious urgent issue.



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The information is to be updated every 3 years, or as new clinical evidence emerges. If there are any concerns or updates with this information, please email cancerpatienteducation@ahs.ca.



For your next appointment

- Bring this booklet
- Arrive 15 minutes early
- Bring a list of your medications
- Bring a list of questions

For other Cancer Care Alberta resources,
visit cancercarealberta.ca



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