

PATIENT INFORMATION

Choroidal Naevus

What is a Choroidal Naevus?

This is a pigmented (darkly coloured) patch seen beneath the retina at the back of the eye. They are present in about 1 in 20 of the general population and tend to be discovered by chance during an eye examination at the opticians. They usually cause no symptoms. Choroidal naevi are similar to skin naevi (moles) that are present in other parts of the body.

Is treatment required for a choroidal naevus?

The vast majority require no treatment. The reason choroidal naevi may be monitored is just in case of the very unlikely possibility, as with moles in the skin, that they might undergo change into a choroidal melanoma. Choroidal melanoma is a form of cancer. This might occur in only 1 in 5000 choroidal naevi.

This monitoring is done at the Eye Department or by an optician. Fundus photographs (photographs of the retina) and sometimes also ultrasound of the eye, are helpful in monitoring for changes. Sometimes there are specific features of a naevus which increase the suspicion that melanoma could develop or be present already. The presence of these specific features may require a referral to a regional centre for further assessment and to consider treatment. This is a very rare event. Otherwise choroidal naevi are mostly harmless although very rarely they can affect vision in other ways for which treatment may or may not be possible.

What happens in the Eye Clinic?

You will undergo an eye examination which will require dilating drops which blur the vision of both eyes for a few hours – so do not drive to your appointment.

You will often have a photograph taken so we can keep a record of the size and location. We may need to make some measurements of the naevus using an ultrasound machine. If you are being discharged from the Eye Clinic, we may give you a copy of this photograph to keep so that you can show it to your optician.

How often should I be checked?

We advise that you are monitored at least on a yearly basis (at the hospital eye clinic or by your optician) and often we may see you more frequently than this especially for the first few appointments. If you have more than one eye condition please be aware that you may attend separate Eye Clinic appointments for each, so please respond to all offers of an appointment from us. Monitoring of choroidal naevus usually continues indefinitely even if the naevus is stable for many years. Therefore, the fact that we continue to monitor you should not make you concerned.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.