

Eye Problems



Unless you have had an operation on your eyes, the most likely cause of eye problems after cancer treatment is radiotherapy to the eye. Radiotherapy to areas of the head or face close to the eyes including total body irradiation can also cause problems. You may already be having regular check ups by an eye specialist because of this. Some of the problems that may happen are:

Cataracts: a thickening and clouding of the lens of the eye may follow radiation of the eyes.

Symptoms of a cataract include blurring and you may slowly see less well. The time taken to develop a cataract depends on how much radiation you had and how it was given. If you do develop a cataract you may not notice it. If it does become a problem then modern day cataract surgery is very effective.

Dry Eyes: A second problem caused by radiation is that you produce less tears, which may lead to a dry and uncomfortable eye. Your eye specialist will advise you about this. Sometimes the use of artificial teardrops is helpful on a regular basis. Having less tears means that you can get an eye infection more easily. Signs of infection (soreness and redness of the eye) must be dealt with promptly.

Discomfort in bright light: A third problem which can occur following radiation to the eye is 'photophobia' – when your eyes feel painful in bright light. If this is the case, you should wear sunglasses in bright sunshine, particularly if you go abroad to sunny resorts for holidays.

In addition to problems with the eye itself, if radiation is given to a young child to the area around the eye this may cause the bones around the eye socket to grow more slowly. If this has caused obvious asymmetry (lop-sidedness) on that side of your face plastic surgery may help to correct the problem. You must talk to your doctor if you are worried about your appearance.

Prosthesis (false eye): Your treatment may have meant your eye was removed and you now have a prosthesis (false eye). You should have access to a specialist centre to provide you with after care for your prosthesis and replacements when they are needed. If you do not routinely go to an eye centre your follow up clinic or GP can arrange this.

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and other useful websites