



ALL ABOUT IRIS TUMORS

What is the iris?

The iris (plural: irides) is a thin, circular organ within the eye that constricts (gets smaller) or dilates (gets bigger) in order to control the amount of light that reaches the retina. A patient's 'eye color' is the color of the iris, which can be blue, gray, green, hazel, brown, or any combination of these.

What types of masses occur in the iris?

Different kinds of iris masses can exist: benign growths such as cysts, freckles (known as **nevi**), growths of blood vessels, and others. Malignant tumors such as iris or iridociliary melanomas or metastases (cancers that spread to the iris from other parts of the body) can also develop.



Iris nevus (freckle)



Iris nevus in the anterior chamber angle, seen through a special mirrored lens



Iris nevus involving the margin of the pupil



Melanoma arising from the ciliary body (organ behind the iris) pushing the iris forward

Iris nevi (freckles) are very common. Most people who have the:

- Are Caucasian
- Are 40 - 60 years of age
- Have light eyes (blue, green, gray)

Iris freckles can be brown, yellow or grayish in color. They can be small and flat, or small and elevated. They sometimes have cysts (fluid-filled spaces) in them, which can be detected on ultrasound.

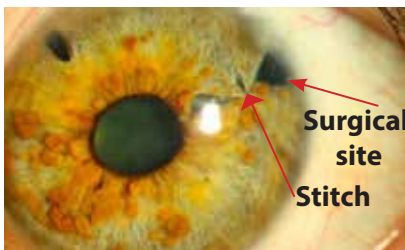
Most of the time the freckles occur at the bottom half of the iris. Many of them never change or grow or some grow very slowly. Rarely, they can grow into an iris melanoma, a malignant tumor of the iris.

Do I need a biopsy?

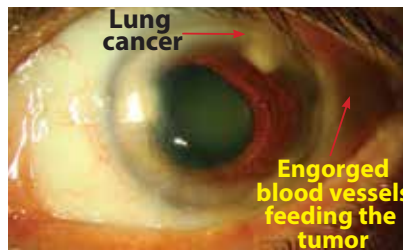
Biopsies are rarely required for iris tumors, as most of them can be diagnosed clinically with an ophthalmic exam, photos, ultrasound, and other forms of testing.

What type of treatment do I need?

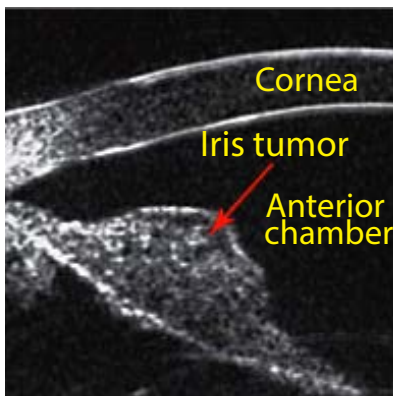
For most iris masses, observation alone is the initial treatment, as many of them stay stable or grow very slowly over time and don't require any treatment.



Many iris freckles in a patient who had surgery to remove an iris melanoma



Fluffy white tissue invading the iris (lung cancer metastasis)



Ultrasound of Iris nevus



Side effects of surgery or radiation

- Dry eyes
- Cataracts
- Non-round pupil shape (primarily cosmetic)

What type of treatment do I need?

For iris melanoma, a malignant tumor that arises from the iris itself, treatment consists of surgery to remove the tumor, radiation, or sometimes even just observation. Iris tumors tend to be small and grow much more slowly and metastasize less often than malignant tumors that arise from other parts of the eye.

Metastasis to the eye (cancer that arises in another part of the body and travels to the eye) are relatively rare and often regress when the underlying cancer is treated with systemic (intravenous) chemotherapy.



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