



EYE APPEAL OPTOMETRY

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Iris and Choroidal Nevus (Nevi)

Freckles (nevi) frequently occur on your skin and body. For the eye, nevi may appear on the iris (colored part of the eye), ciliary body, and the choroid (the back part inside your eye). They are usually flat, dark lesions lying in the tissue that do not interfere with the function of the tissue itself. If the nevus is on the outer colored portion of the eye, it may be noted as an iris freckle. In the back part of the eye (the fundus), flat pigmented areas may be noted during a dilated eye exam.

Like freckles on the skin, nevi sometimes develop into cancerous lesions. Also, large choroidal nevi are sometimes difficult to differentiate from cancerous lesions such as malignant melanomas. Malignant melanomas are a rare but serious disorder. Melanomas can grow larger, decrease the function of the eye, spread to other parts of the body, and can be deadly.

Yearly (and sometimes more frequent) dilated exams are important to monitor the shape, size, color, number and appearance of the nevi and compare changes from year to year. Doctors look for the unchanging gray color of the nevus, their flat appearance, and the lack of extensions, which are abnormal blood vessels. Because of the difficulties in the differentiation from malignant melanomas, your doctor may take pictures of your eyes or take ultrasound measurements to compare year to year.

Iris and choroidal nevi are generally quite common, especially in lighter colored individuals. If you notice any unusual and sudden changes in the colored portion of your eye (shape, appearance, number) and your vision (i.e. blur, pain), call your doctor for an appointment. Like freckles on the skin, protection from UV rays may be beneficial. Your doctor may recommend the use of sunglasses. Periodic exams are important to monitor for changes on the iris and choroidal nevi that form in the back part of your eye.

Sincerely,

Henry Oishi, O.D.