

Melanoma: Advanced disease and recurrence (leaflet 7 of 7)

Patient information from the British Association of Dermatologists

Produced for National Cancer Patient Information Pathways, National Cancer Action Team



Melanoma leaflets in this series, produced by the British Association of Dermatologists:

1. Prevention and risk factors
2. Symptom awareness and early detection
3. Referral, tests and investigations
4. Diagnosis and staging
5. Treatments
6. Follow up care and cancer in remission
7. **Advanced disease and recurrence**

If your melanoma is a stage 4, this means it has metastasized (spread) to other parts of the body and is called 'advanced' (see fact sheet on staging). Treatment of the secondary cancer will depend on where in the body it is.

Treatment of recurrent melanoma can be with surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

Surgical treatment can be used to remove melanoma if it is in just one or two areas. If the disease is more widespread then this becomes less practical.

Chemotherapy medicines can be given either to the whole body or just to one limb. If given to the whole body, this will usually be part of a clinical trial. At present different combinations and doses using new treatments are being researched, to try and identify a treatment that will be of the greatest help. Patients are advised about involvement in clinical trials and are not obliged to participate.

If melanoma has spread to new areas but is still in one limb, this can sometimes be treated with isolated limb infusion. This technique involves circulating chemotherapy to just one limb which has the blood supply temporarily stopped. This method allows the arm or leg to have chemotherapy whilst reducing the side effects of the treatment to the rest of the body.

Radiotherapy is a treatment using X rays. This is sometimes used to shrink areas of melanoma that have spread to areas where surgery may be difficult. The treatment is given using radiotherapy machines in hospital and treatment may be a single treatment lasting a few minutes or can be a course over several weeks.

For more information, please contact: British Association of Dermatologists, 4 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 5HQ, website: www.bad.org.uk, tel: 0207 383 0266

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