

# Eyelid Tumors

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## BASIC INFORMATION

### Description

Eyelid tumors are growths that occur within or near the eyelids. Most eyelid tumors in the dog are benign, whereas most in the cat are malignant. Older animals are affected most often. The growth rate of eyelid tumors ranges from very slow to very rapid.

### Causes

Many eyelid tumors arise from the cells or tissues within the eyelid, but some originate in other locations and spread to the eye or invade the eyelid from adjacent structures.

In the dog, the most common tumor types are the sebaceous adenoma and the papilloma. Tumors that occur in both dogs and cats include the melanoma, mast cell tumor, basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, fibrosarcoma, lymphoma, and others. In most cases, it is not known why these tumors develop.

### Clinical Signs

A mass is visible at the edge or within the eyelid. It may be smooth, irregular, nodular, or ulcerated. The color of these masses is quite variable. The eyelid may be deformed and inflamed. Conjunctivitis, ocular discharge, and corneal ulceration may also occur. Most tumors are not painful unless they cause ulceration, in which case the animal may paw or rub the eye and squinting may be noted.

### Diagnostic Tests

The presence of a tumor can usually be determined by close examination of the eyelid and eye. Aspiration and cytology of larger masses may provide a tentative diagnosis as to the type of tumor present, but usually a definitive diagnosis requires biopsy and pathologic examination. Other tests may be performed to search for tumors elsewhere in the body if the eyelid tumor is suspected to be malignant or to have originated in another location. Preoperative laboratory tests and chest x-rays may also be recommended prior to anesthesia and surgery.

## TREATMENT AND FOLLOW-UP

### Treatment Options

Small, benign eyelid tumors can often be removed by a full-thickness resection, which involves taking out a wedge of the eyelid that includes the tumor. The eyelid is then sutured back together. Occasionally, these small tumors are removed with a laser and the defect is not sutured. Larger tumors require more involved surgeries, with formation of a new eyelid margin.

Other treatments that may be tried for particular types of tumors include cryotherapy (freezing), chemotherapy (especially for lymphoma and metastatic tumors), and radiation therapy. In severe cases in which the tumor is malignant and invading the eye or the tissues immediately around the eye, surgery to remove the eye and all affected tissues may be necessary.

### Follow-up Care

Following surgery, it is common for the patient to be sent home with an Elizabethan collar in place to keep the animal from bothering the sutures. Topical antibiotics may be administered to the eye. The sutures are usually removed in 10-14 days. Signs of post-operative problems include squinting, tearing, and increased ocular discharge; if any of these signs occur, immediately notify your veterinarian.

### Prognosis

Benign tumors that are completely removed are usually cured by surgery. Prognosis is particularly good when the tumors are still small at the time of surgery and the eyelid margin can be reformed as normally as possible. Following extensive surgery to remove large tumors, it may be necessary to monitor for growth of hairs that rub on the cornea and for corneal inflammation.

Malignant tumors often recur at the surgery site and may spread to other areas of the body. Following removal of these tumors, additional treatment and monitoring are usually needed. The long-term prognosis with many of the malignant tumors is poor.