



Adjuvant therapies in melanoma

A guide to navigate treatment options



Dive into the basics

What is Stage III melanoma?

Stage III melanoma has spread to the lymph nodes. Stage III can be divided into 4 categories based on the evolution of the tumour and the extent of the spread to the lymph nodes. These categories are classified as A, B, C and D. These 4 categories are used to determine prognosis and treatment of the melanoma.

What is primary treatment for Stage III melanoma?

Surgery may be recommended once diagnosis is confirmed. The goal of surgery is to remove the cancer and the affected lymph nodes to minimize the risk of the cancer returning.

What is the genetic mutation of the tumour?

The tissue that was removed during surgery will be tested for specific gene mutations. Certain mutations can alter a gene. For example, approximately half of all melanomas have a mutation in the BRAF gene. Identifying associated gene mutations can help determine if additional treatment options such as targeted therapies are recommended.

Once you know the stage of the melanoma, you can discuss next steps of care with your health care professional.

Navigating treatment options

What is adjuvant therapy?

Patients who may have had surgery to remove stage III melanoma with no evidence of visible disease could still have recurrence as a result of undetected microscopic spread. Adjuvant therapy is additional systemic treatment used after surgery to remove any remaining cancer and reduce the chance of the cancer returning.

“Knowing my BRAF mutation and learning about treatment options helped my family and I decide how to move forward in successfully treating my melanoma.”
- Natalie R. Stage IIIb melanoma

Consult your medical team to learn if adjuvant therapy is right for you.

What types of adjuvant therapies are available after surgery?

Observation

Observation with scheduled follow-up testing and imaging surveillance can be used to watch for the cancer spreading or returning.

Systemic Treatment Options

Dabrafenib + Trametinib (brand name Tafinlar® + Mekinist®)

A pill combination that is swallowed to help prevent melanoma from returning in patients who have the BRAF mutation. Dabrafenib and Trametinib, respectively, inhibit the BRAF and MEK proteins. BRAF and MEK are key molecules that help regulate cell growth. Dabrafenib and Trametinib stops cancer cells from spreading.

Nivolumab (brand name Opdivo®)

A medicine that is given intravenously in the hospital or clinic to help delay or prevent melanoma from returning after the cancer and its metastases have been removed. Nivolumab is an immune checkpoint inhibitor that targets PD-1, a protein on immune system cells (called T cells) that normally help keep these cells from attacking other cells in the body. Nivolumab blocks the PD-1 protein to help increase immune activity against melanoma.

Pembrolizumab (brand name Keytruda®)

Medication that is given intravenously in the hospital or clinic to help prevent melanoma from returning. Pembrolizumab also blocks the PD-1 protein to help increase immune activity against melanoma.

Additional Support

General questions to ask your oncologist or surgeon at your appointment

What are the risks and benefits of adjuvant therapy?

What should be considered when determining an appropriate adjuvant therapy?

Will the same doctor that surgically removed my tumour discuss adjuvant therapy options with me?

How or when will I get more information regarding prognosis or outlook for my melanoma diagnosis?



Online resources available for Patients



Melanoma Network of Canada (MNC)

www.melanomanetwork.ca

Melanoma Network of Canada (MNC) is dedicated to serving melanoma and skin cancer patients. Our goals are to increase Canadians' understanding of skin cancers, and their prevention through education and public awareness programs. To support melanoma and skin cancer patients, caregivers, and medical professionals through current and coordinated information and services, and to create a national network advocating for additional and effective treatment options and provide a united voice for patients with melanoma and skin cancer.



Save Your Skin Foundation (SYSF)

www.saveyourskin.ca

Save Your Skin Foundation (SYSF) is a patient-led organization dedicated to the fight against non-melanoma skin cancers, melanoma, and ocular melanoma through education, advocacy, and awareness initiatives across Canada. SYSF provides a community of oncology patient and caregiver support throughout the entire continuum of care, from prevention and diagnosis to survivorship.