



ADJUVANT THERAPIES IN MELANOMA

A guide to navigate treatment options

Dive into the basics

What is Stage IIB or IIC melanoma?

In stage II, the cancer has not spread to nearby lymph nodes or to distant sites. Stage II is divided into three levels IIA, IIB, and IIC. Stage IIB and IIC melanoma is at a greater risk of recurring based on the depth of the melanoma and/or the presence of ulceration on the pathology report.

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 IIB, IIC, III melanoma?

Surgery will likely 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 have had surgery to remove stage IIB, IIC or III melanoma with no evidence of visible disease could still have a recurrence as a result of undetectable microscopic spread. Adjuvant therapy is additional systemic treatment used after surgery to remove any microscopic cancer cells and reduce the chance of the cancer returning.

“Having access to adjuvant treatment meant I could continue to enjoy the best years of my life with my husband and my family. Having more time meant everything to me.”

- Sue, Stage IIB patient



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 has 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. Opdivo, as monotherapy, is indicated for the adjuvant treatment of adult patients with Stage IIB, IIC or III melanoma following complete resection.

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. Pembrolizumab is indicated for the adjuvant treatment of adult and pediatric (12 years and older) patients with Stage IIB, IIC or III melanoma following complete resection.

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?

If I start adjuvant therapy and still experience a recurrence, how do my future treatment options change?

What are some of the possible side effects from treatment?

Will these treatments have an impact on my fertility?

Are there any adjuvant clinical trials that would be appropriate for me?



Online resources available for Patients

SUPPORT & RESOURCES FOR ANYONE, ANYWHERE.

A melanoma & skin cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming. But you don't have to face the challenges alone. Melanoma Canada offers a wide variety of free services to support patients, families and caregivers through every step of their journey.

PHONE AND EMAIL SUPPORT

Available Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm EST. We aim to respond to all inquiries within 48 hours. All calls and emails are confidential.

CANCER COACHING

Available Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm EST. We aim to respond to all inquiries within 48 hours. All communications are strictly confidential.

PATIENT INFORMATION SESSION

Melanoma Canada's Patient Information Sessions are a series of presentations by leading Canadian oncologists, dermatologists, surgeons, psychologists and more on the latest in melanoma treatment options and support services.

PEER TO PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

Providing patients and caregivers with someone who has been down the same path can provide immeasurable support.

MELANOMA & SKIN CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

Virtual Monthly support group meetings in a virtual format the first Wednesday of every month. Our groups share information, understanding, challenges, questions, tips and invites guest speakers. We provide an evening of encouragement, connection and support.

FACEBOOK SUPPORT GROUPS

Connect with other melanoma and skin cancer patients or caregivers in a private, safe, and monitored platform. We offer disease specific groups for skin cancer and melanoma, as well as grief and caregiver support groups. Our groups are designed to offer vital community and connection.



**Please scan the QR code for our
full list of support programs.**

Notes



Our Mission:

Melanoma Canada advocates for and supports Canadians living with melanoma and skin cancer with helpful resources, education, psychosocial support services, and more.

Melanoma Canada

Phone: 905-901-5121 | Toll Free: 1-877-560-8035

melanomacanada.ca

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