

What is Mohs Surgery?

Mohs micrographic surgery is a method of excising skin cancers in layers. With the layers, the entire edge and undersurface is examined under a microscope for the incidence of cancer cells. In areas where further cancer is noted, additional layers of the skin are removed until a level free of tumor is reached. The extent and depth of the tumor determine the number of layers of surgery necessary to remove the cancer. Most tumors are removed in 1-3 surgical stages. The cure rate with Mohs is 97%-99% with good preservation of normal skin and minimal scarring; particularly when dealing with cancers on the face. It offers the highest potential for a cure for skin cancer while minimizing the cosmetic impact.

Mohs surgery is recommended for the following:

- ☞ Skin cancers of the head & neck where preservation of normal skin is important.
- ☞ When a skin cancer returns after a prior treatment.
- ☞ When the cancer is large
- ☞ When the cancer is considered to be more aggressive on the biopsy

The goals of Mohs surgery with Dr. Flanagan are complete removal of all detectable cancer cells, and reconstruction of the surgical wound with optimal cosmetic result.

How to prepare for Mohs Surgery

While no special preparations are required prior to surgery a few simple guidelines should be followed. Be well rested and eat a good breakfast. Depending on the depth of the skin cancer you may be in our office for a few hours. The average time is 2-4 hours, but you should plan on spending much of the day in our office. Take your usual medications **unless otherwise directed by Dr. Flanagan or her medical assistants**. If you take any products containing aspirin they needed to be stopped 1 week prior to surgery. Tylenol may be used in place of aspirin or ibuprofen for pain. It is advised to shower the night before or morning of your surgery as your wound dressing may have to remain dry for 24 hours.

If you have been advised to take antibiotics prior to any dental procedures, please notify Dr. Flanagan or her medical assistants prior to your visit and they will instruct you accordingly.

The Day of Surgery

Eat breakfast and lunch as usual and take your usual medications **unless otherwise directed by our office**. If the skin cancer is located on the face, please do not wear make-up on or around the area.

The operative site will be cleaned with antibacterial soap, and the visible tumor may be outlined and then numbed by a small local injection. It will take approximately 15 minutes to surgically remove the first stage. Depending on the amount of tissue removed it will take approximately 20-60 minutes to process the tissue in the lab. If the examination reveals any roots of cancer extending beyond the original surgical site, we will go back and selectively remove more tissue. This process will be repeated until there is no more detectable cancer. You may want to bring reading material or your computer to occupy your time while waiting between stages.

Reconstruction

Because Mohs surgery removes as little normal tissue as possible, scarring is minimized. After your skin cancer has been surgically removed, Dr. Flanagan will decide how to best care for the wound depending on its size and location in order to minimize scarring.

Most of the wound closures are performed on the day of surgery in our office. Dr. Flanagan is trained in many forms of specialized stitched wound closures including skin flaps and grafts. However, other surgical specialists may be utilized for unique closures if necessary.

What to expect after Mohs Surgery

Weeks after surgery, your surgical wound will require some care. Occasionally, preventative antibiotics may be prescribed after surgery. You should plan on taking it easy after surgery. Stitches are removed approximately 7-10 days after surgery.

Most patients report minimal pain which responds readily to Tylenol. If you have significant pain you should contact our office. Skin cancers frequently involve sensory nerves, and months may pass before your skin sensation around the site returns to normal. Itching around the surgical site is common and the areas may feel tight in the short-term. Complete healing of the surgical wound can take in excess of 12 months but is most noticeable in the first few weeks to months.

Post-Operative Wound Care

The importance of post-operative care to your surgical site cannot be over stressed. The care you take of

yourself and your surgical wound is extremely important to the success of the procedure and to your recovery and well being.

Should bleeding occur, apply firm constant pressure on the bandage for 20 minutes. That will usually stop minor bleeding. If bleeding worsens contact our office immediately.

Swelling may also occur following surgery. Swelling occurs because surgery has caused a wound and your body reacts to that injury. To reduce the amount of swelling that may occur apply an ice bag for 20 minutes each hour during the waking hours wrapping a thin towel around it to keep the bandage dry.

Pain post-operatively is generally minimal. In nearly all cases, extra strength Tylenol will relieve any pain you may experience.

Wound Care- Two Times Each Day

- ☞ Wash your hands with soap and water
- ☞ Clean wound with soap and water with a cottonball or Q-Tip to remove crusts from wound
- ☞ Dry wound thoroughly with clean cloth by blotting
- ☞ Apply a thin layer of antibiotic ointment such as bacitracin with a Q-Tip
- ☞ Cover with clean dry dressing

Signs of infection include increased pain, swelling, redness or yellowish drainage several days after surgery.

There will be a scar and redness in the surgical area after surgery. This will decrease as healing progresses but redness should be expected as long as six months. Because of the unpredictability in wound healing, the final appearance cannot be preoperatively ascertained; therefore, no guarantee can be implied or stated as to the final appearance of the scar.

What are the risks of Mohs Surgery?

Because Mohs Surgery is performed on an outpatient basis the risks are minimal. All of these risks are the exception not the rule with Mohs surgery.

- ☞ There is always a scar when you perform surgery. Dr. Flanagan's goal once all traces of skin cancer have been removed is to obtain optimal cosmetic results.

- ☞ There may be poor wound healing despite our best efforts. Bleeding, poor health, smoking, and diabetes, among other things, can impact how an individual heals. Occasionally flaps or grafts used for reconstruction fail. A good cosmetic result is still possible and scars can later be revised.
- ☞ Any time you cut the skin infection can occur. This is, however, rare in dermatologic surgery like Mohs. Post-operative bleeding can occur due to many factors (medications, high blood pressure, and physical activity). If bleeding becomes excessive call our office immediately.
- ☞ Allergic reactions can occur rarely to stitches or occasionally to bandages. Please notify us of any known allergies; however, new reactions to medications may occur.

Important Reminders

DO

- ☞ Notify us as soon as possible if you must cancel or reschedule your appointment
- ☞ Plan on spending most of the day with us on the day of your surgery
- ☞ Take your usual medications on schedule unless instructed otherwise
- ☞ Let the staff know if you take Coumadin or antibiotics before dental work
- ☞ Dress comfortably. You may also want to bring a sweater as the office may be cold
- ☞ Eat a normal breakfast/lunch unless otherwise instructed
- ☞ Bring something to read, your computer, and a light snack if desired
- ☞ Expect some swelling & bruising following surgery
- ☞ If you don't believe you will be able to drive, arrange for someone to drive you to and from your appointment.
- ☞ Sleep with your head and shoulders elevated on extra pillows if surgery was on the face, head or neck.
- ☞ Take it easy for a week after surgery. Bending or lifting may increase the risk of bleeding

DO NOT

- ☞ DO NOT take herbal supplements that may increase bleeding (vitamin E, garlic, ginko, ginger, feverfew, and ginseng.) Stop these 1-2 weeks prior to surgery

- ☞ DO NOT consume alcohol for 24 hours before or 48 hours after surgery. It can increase the risk of bleeding
- ☞ DO NOT wear make-up if you are having surgery on your face
- ☞ DO NOT swim in public pools, hot tubs, or the ocean while stitches are in place. This can increase the risk of a post-operative infection.
- ☞ DO NOT stoop or bend. Avoid straining to have a bowel movement if surgery was on face, head or neck.

Home Healthcare Services

Here at Genesis Dermatology we are happy to set up home healthcare services for those patients who are unable to take care of their surgical areas or need assistance with bandage changes on certain areas. If you are interested in the home healthcare service please inform our staff the day of your surgery so appropriate scheduling can be made.

**Finally...
Please review this
handout. We want you
to be as
comfortable, relaxed
and informed as
possible. If you any
other questions or
concerns, please
call our office at
(561) 296-5222.**



Mohs Micrographic Surgery

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