

Mohs Micrographic Surgery



Allina Health

Mohs Micrographic Surgery

Mohs micrographic surgery is a procedure used to treat skin cancer. It is commonly used for cancer that:

- has a high risk for coming back again
- has returned after being treated
- is found in areas such as the head, neck, hands and feet.

During surgery, the cancer tissue is removed and checked by your surgeon. If cancer remains then additional skin is taken until all the cancer tissue has been removed.

The length of surgery will depend on how many layers of tissue need to be removed. Your surgeon won't know how many layers until the surgery has started. For most people, it usually lasts at least 4 hours.

It is best to plan that your surgery may take all day and not schedule other appointments for that day.

Preparing for Surgery

- ❑ If you use tobacco, stop using it. Ask your doctor about the different ways to quit.
- ❑ Do not drink alcohol for 2 days before and 2 days after surgery.
- ❑ Do not plan any vacations, or plan to exercise, do yard work or heavy lifting for 1 to 2 weeks after surgery.
- ❑ Tell your doctor if you:
 - are breastfeeding, pregnant or think you may be pregnant
 - have a latex allergy
 - have diabetes
 - take a blood-thinner medicine such as warfarin (Jantoven[®]), clopidogrel (Plavix[®]), enoxaparin (Lovenox[®]) or heparin
 - take any prescription and over-the-counter medicines, herbals and/or vitamins
 - are immunosuppressed (weak immune system). You may need to take antibiotics before surgery.
- ❑ **Ask your doctor which medicines you should take before surgery and when.**
 - Check with your primary care provider if you are taking blood-thinning medicines (such as aspirin, warfarin, Plavix[®] or Ticlid[®]). You may need to have your INR level checked before surgery to make sure it is not too high.
- ❑ Arrange to have an adult drive you to and from your surgery.
- ❑ **Arrange to have an adult stay with you at home the first 12 hours after your surgery.**

You may have an adult friend or family member with you during surgery, if you wish. Please do not bring children.

The Morning of Surgery

- Eat a good breakfast.
(If your surgery is in the afternoon, eat lunch.)
- Take any regular medicines the morning of your surgery, or as directed by your surgeon.
- Bring any medicines you normally take during the day.
- Bring a list of your medicines with you to the hospital. Include prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbals. Include the name of the medicine, how much you take, and the last time you took the medicine.
- Do not wear makeup, perfume or hair spray.
- Wear loose-fitting, comfortable clothing. Do not wear white shirts or blouses.
- Please arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled surgery time to complete paper work.

What to Expect Before Surgery

- You will register at the front desk.
- A nurse will meet with you to complete your care plan and review what you can expect before and after your surgery. The nurse will review your health history. You will be asked questions about any allergies you have and medicines you are taking.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form, if you haven't already done so.
- If you have questions or concerns, please ask a member of your health care team.
- A close-up photo will be taken of the area of your surgery site.
- Your surgeon will cleanse, mark and confirm the area of your surgery site with you.
- A local anesthetic (medicine) will be injected into the surgery site to numb the area.

During Surgery

- The visible cancer and a thin layer of normal-appearing tissue around the cancer are removed.
- Your surgeon will look at the tissue under a microscope. This process will take about 1 to 1 ½ hours.
- During this time, a bandage will be placed on your skin and you will be asked to wait in the patient lobby.
- If cancer is found, another thin layer of cancer tissue will be removed.
- After each layer of tissue is removed, your surgeon will look at the sample under a microscope and you will be asked to wait in the patient lobby.
- Your surgeon will continue to remove layers of cancer tissue and look at them under a microscope until there is no more cancer found in the sample.
- When no more cancer is found, your surgeon will take another close-up photo of the area of your surgery site.
- Your surgeon may use stitches to close the site. It is possible that you won't need stitches and the site can heal by itself.

After Surgery

- You may have some discomfort at the surgery site. You may take acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®). Follow the package directions.
- You may have some bruising or swelling at the surgery site. This is normal.
- You may have a follow-up appointment within 1 week after your surgery. This appointment may be at a different location than where you had your surgery. Staff will help you with scheduling.
- You may return to your normal activities after 1 week, or as directed by your surgeon.

Surgery Site Healing

- If you had stitches, you will have a follow-up appointment to remove them 1 to 2 weeks after surgery.
- If you did not have stitches, you can expect the area of your surgery site to heal in 4 to 6 weeks.
- You will have a scar at the surgery site. Sometimes, a second procedure is needed to help the scar be less noticeable. This is usually done 4 to 8 weeks after surgery. Your scar will continue for up to 12 months after surgery.

Possible Risks

As with any treatment, this surgery has some possible risks. These include:

- bleeding
- infection
- pain
- temporary or permanent nerve injury that causes numbness.

Your health care provider will talk with you about any specific risks before having surgery.

When To Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you have:

- a temperature of 101 F or higher
- new pain or pain you can't control
- bleeding that doesn't stop after you have put pressure on the area for 15 minutes, two times.
- signs of infection at your surgery site that get worse over 2 to 3 days:
 - pain
 - swelling
 - redness
 - odor
 - warmth
 - green or yellow discharge
- any questions or concerns.

Insurance Coverage

It is important to understand your health care benefits before your treatment. Most insurance providers do cover the costs of Mohs micrographic surgery. Call your insurance provider to find out exactly what is and is not covered under your plan, and how much you have to pay yourself.



Notes



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