

Mohs Micrographic Surgery

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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 one thin layer at a time until all the cancer tissue has been removed. Very little normal tissue is removed during this surgery.

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.

Before Surgery

- Eat a good breakfast.
- Take any regular medicines the morning of your surgery, or as directed by your surgeon.
- Tell your health care provider 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, vitamins or all
- are immunosuppressed (have a weak immune system).

- You will need to sign a consent form.

During Surgery

- Your surgeon will cleanse and mark the area of your surgery site.
- A local anesthetic (medicine) will be injected into the surgery site to numb the area.
- The visible cancer and a thin layer of normal 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.

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- 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 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 return to your normal activities after 1 week, or as directed by your surgeon.

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 isn't covered under your plan, and how much you have to pay yourself.