

What to expect when you have Mohs Surgery

This information will guide you and your family during and after your procedure.

How to Prepare for Mohs Surgery

In general, you should treat your day of having Mohs Surgery similar to any other day. Try to get a good night's sleep the night before. Fasting isn't necessary, but don't drink alcoholic beverages for 48-hours before surgery. Be sure to take all your regularly scheduled physician-prescribed

medications. The main thing to prepare for is the potential for a long day, most of which is spent waiting for slide results. Please pack some snacks, something to read and also feel free to bring someone with you to keep you company.

What to Expect on the Day of Mohs Surgery

Our staff will bring you to our surgical suite. Together, we will identify and confirm with you the location(s) of the tumor(s). We will then anesthetize the area with local anesthesia. We then perform the first stage of Mohs surgery which usually takes 20-30 minutes. You may be loosely bandaged and taken to a special waiting room. It takes approximately 30 minutes for the tissue to be processed in the lab. After this we will repeat the Mohs surgery stages and tissue processing as necessary to clear the tumor. It usually takes most patients 2-3 stages to clear a tumor, with each stage taking approximately 30-45 minutes.

Occasionally, it can take 4-5 or more stages to clear the tumor. Sometimes, but rarely, we are not able to completely clear the tumor in one day and may ask you to come back the following day to continue the Mohs surgery procedure. The reconstructive procedure following Mohs may take an additional 30-45 minutes.

Once the surgery is complete, our staff will give you written and verbal instructions on how to care for your wound. If prescriptions for antibiotics or pain medications are indicated, you will receive them at this time.

What to Expect on the Day of Mohs Surgery

First, our Mohs surgeons will numb the area around the tumor using local anesthesia. While this may sting for a few seconds, it is usually the only pain felt throughout the entire procedure.

Next, the visible portion of the tumor is carefully removed using a scalpel or curette.

Next, a thin, pancake-shaped layer of tissue is removed to check the margins for the possible

presence of additional cancerous cells. This tissue is brought to our on-site laboratory where it is processed and slides are prepared for the surgeons to read. Our lab technicians typically require 30 minutes to prepare slides.

During this time, a loose, gauze bandage will be placed on your wound and you may be brought to a private waiting room area to await the results.

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You and your guests will be free to relax, watch TV, and have light refreshments.

When your slides are ready, our Mohs surgeons will examine the margins of the tissue with a microscope and check for any residual tumor.

If there are any cancerous cells left, you will be brought back to your surgery room, and another tissue layer will be taken. This process is repeated until all the margins of the tissue are free of the tumor.

Reconstructive Surgery Following Mohs

Once the tumor is removed, you will be left with a surgical wound. All of our Mohs surgeons have extensive experience and training in complex reconstruction. They will discuss and make recommendations on the repair option that will achieve the best cosmetic and functional result for your specific wound. These options include:

1) Natural Healing

In certain areas of the face and body, wounds actually recover best when left to heal naturally. Wounds healing on their own may take a month or more to fill in and you may need to change the bandages regularly during this time.

2) Closing with stitches

This involves pulling the wound edges together and closing the wound with surgical stitches. The suturing usually lasts anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours to complete. You will need to return about a week later to have the stitches removed.

3) Skin Graft

This option involves taking skin from another part of the body and stitching it into place to close the wound. You should not get the dressing or the underlying graft wet for the first 24 hours. You will need to return about two weeks later to have the stitches removed.

4) Skin Flap

This process involves surgically cutting and pulling skin from an area adjacent to the wound and stitching it in place. Usually you will need to return in 1 week to have the stitches taken out. Sometimes skin flaps may require a second stage or additional surgery to complete. This may be scheduled 2-3 weeks after the initial surgery.

5) Consultation with another surgical specialist

Our experts may recommend that you see another surgical specialist to repair your surgical wound after Mohs. Our office will always coordinate with these outside specialists and make arrangements to simplify scheduling your procedures. You may have reconstructive surgery with a specialist on the same day or several days after your Mohs procedure.

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