

# Mohs Micrographic Surgery

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In preparation for your upcoming appointment for Mohs surgery, we would like you to review the enclosed information. This information will give you some insight into Mohs micrographic surgery, answer some frequently asked questions, and provide directions to our office. Our hope is that this information will answer many of your questions and relieve potential anxiety as your appointment approaches.

## **Important information:**

- Questions concerning your upcoming surgery can be addressed by our Mohs Support Specialist at **(910) 251-9944**.
- Continue taking aspirin or blood thinning medications if these have been prescribed by your physician.
- If you take antibiotics prior to dental or other surgical procedures, or have a history of rheumatic fever, heart murmur, artificial heart valve or artificial joint, please mention this once you arrive for your appointment. We may give antibiotics prior to your surgery if necessary.
- Anticipate quite a few stitches. In order to have a superior final cosmetic result it often requires multiple tin sutures that usually extend outside the area where the cancer is located. Expect bruising and swelling for several days after the surgery.

## **On the day of your surgery:**

- **You will be informed if you need a driver for your return home**
- **Take all of your normal medications as prescribed**
- **Do not apply makeup, creams, lotions, etc. near the surgery site**
- **Eat a healthy breakfast and bring snacks/lunch**

We hope you will find this information helpful. If you have any further questions after reviewing this material, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

We look forward to making sure your experience with Mohs surgery is a positive one and appreciate the opportunity to serve you.

# Mohs Micrographic Surgery

Mohs surgery, also called Mohs micrographic surgery, is a specialized technique for removing skin cancer. Named for Dr. Frederic Mohs, who developed the technique, Mohs surgery is the treatment of choice for many skin cancers. It offers the following advantages:

- Highest cure rate. The tissue is prepared and examined in our lab which allows for complete microscopic evaluation of 100% of the deep and lateral margins. This allows mapping of the cancer to precisely trace out and remove all the roots.
- Best cosmetic result. Because there is no need to take a large margin of healthy skin in Mohs surgery, the size of the wound left after tumor removal is minimized. Keeping the defect small optimizes the surgical repair, and produces a superior cosmetic result.

Mohs surgery is an outpatient procedure that is performed under local anesthesia; therefore, the risks associated with prolonged general anesthesia (being “put to sleep”) are avoided. Before the surgery begins, a small needle is used to place the numbing medicine in the area surrounding the skin cancer. After this first step, the remainder of the procedure is relatively pain free. The surgeon first removes the obvious skin cancer that can be seen with the unaided eye. Next, a very thin saucer-shaped layer of normal appearing skin is removed taking special care to map the tissue so that the surgeon is able to determine the corresponding margins on the patient. The tissue is then processed by the laboratory located in our office- a process that takes about an hour. Microscopic slides are prepared by a technologist and examined by the surgeon to determine if the cancer is persistent.

If microscopic examination reveals remaining tumor, a map is drawn indicating the precise location. You are then brought back to the surgery suite, and additional anesthetic is injected to reinforce the initial injection. In most cases, the area is still numb and you will feel little to no discomfort.

Another layer of tissue is removed- but only where the map indicated residual cancer. The healthy tissue is left alone and only the cancer-containing tissue is excised. This tissue is again brought to the laboratory and the process is repeated until all evident cancer is removed.

Because the number of stages involved with each case is unpredictable, it is impossible to know how long the surgery will take. For this reason, it is important for patients to plan on spending the entire day with us. Do not be discouraged if your cancer is not removed in one step. Remember, we are tracing the roots of the tumor in a stepwise fashion. This must be done in small layers. Bring a good book and whatever else will help keep you comfortable while you are with us.

Once all the cancer has been removed, we will then discuss the options to reconstruct the resulting defect or open wound. This usually requires stitches.