

Mohs Micrographic Surgery Overview

Mohs Micrographic Surgery is the most advanced and effective treatment procedure for skin cancer available today. ACMS fellowship-trained Mohs surgeons are required to complete an intensive one or two-year post-residency training program (in addition to the physician's three-year dermatology residency). This extensive training includes participating in at least 500 Mohs Micrographic Surgery cases under the supervision of an experienced, ACMS-approved Mohs surgeon.

Initially developed by Dr. Frederic E. Mohs, the Mohs procedure is a state-of-the-art treatment that has been continuously refined over 70 years. With the Mohs technique, physicians are able to see beyond the visible disease, to precisely identify and remove the entire tumor layer by layer while leaving the surrounding healthy tissue intact and unharmed. As the most exact and precise method of tumor removal, it minimizes the chance of re-growth and lessens the potential for scarring or disfigurement. Because the physician is specially trained in surgery, pathology, and reconstruction, Mohs surgery has the highest success rate of all treatments for skin cancer - up to 99 percent. The Mohs technique is also the treatment of choice for cancers of the face and other sensitive areas as it relies on the accuracy of a microscopic surgical procedure to trace the edges of the cancer and ensure complete removal of all tumors down to the roots during the initial surgery.

About Mohs Micrographic Surgery: Effectiveness

Mohs Micrographic Surgery is an effective and precise method for treating basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers.

Because the Mohs Micrographic Surgery process surgery features a systematic microscopic search that traces skin cancer down to its roots, it offers the highest chance for complete removal of the tumor while sparing the normal tissue surrounding it.

Clinical studies conducted at various national and international medical institutions - including the Mayo Clinic, the University of Miami School of Medicine and Royal Perth Hospital in Australia - demonstrate that Mohs surgery provides **five-year cure rates exceed 99 percent for new cancers, and 95 percent for recurrent cancers.**

Why Does My Skin Cancer Need Mohs Surgery?

Mohs Micrographic Surgery is primarily used to treat basal and squamous cell carcinomas.

Mohs Surgery is appropriate when:

- the cancer is in an area where it is important to preserve healthy tissue for maximum functional and cosmetic result, such as eyelids, nose, ears, lips, fingers, toes, genitals;
- the cancer was treated previously and recurred;
- scar tissue exists in the area of the cancer;
- the cancer is large;
- the edges of the cancer cannot be clearly defined;
- the cancer is growing rapidly or uncontrollably.

About Mohs Micrographic Surgery: The Procedure and Post-Operative Care

The Mohs Micrographic Surgery Process

Mohs surgery is usually an outpatient procedure performed in a physician's office. Typically, it starts in the morning and can be completed the same day, depending on the extent of the tumor and the amount of reconstruction necessary.

Step 1: Local anesthesia is administered around the area of the tumor so the patient is awake during the entire procedure.

Step 2: The visible area of the tumor is surgically removed. The tissue is divided into sections and each section is color coded with dyes. A map of the surgical site is made by the surgeon.

Step 3: The undersurface and perimeter of each section is microscopically examined by the surgeon for evidence of remaining cancer. If cancer cells are found under the microscope the surgeon marks their location on the map and returns to the patient to remove another layer of tissue -- but only precisely from where the cancer cells remain.

Step 4: The process ends when there is no longer any evidence of cancer remaining in the surgical site.

Because Mohs surgery removes only tissue containing cancer it ensures that the maximum amount of healthy tissue is kept intact.

Mohs Surgery Reconstruction- Repairing the Wound

The ACMS surgeon is also trained in reconstructive procedures and often will perform the necessary reconstruction to repair the wound.

As soon as the affected area is declared cancer-free, the Mohs surgeon discusses post-surgical options with the patient such as:

- a small, simple wound may be allowed to heal on its own.
- a slightly larger wound may be closed with stitches.
- larger wounds may require a skin graft or a flap.

Mohs Micrographic Surgery Post-Surgical Management

Post-surgical check-ups with your dermatologist are recommended in order to spot any possible cancer recurrence in a timely manner.

Since two of five patients with one skin cancer will develop another within five years, follow up is extremely important for early detection of any new lesions.

For tips on skin cancer prevention, please click on the "skin cancer prevention" form.

Most of this information, as well as a patient education video, is available for your review on the ACMS website at <http://www.mohscollege.org/>