

BEFORE MOHS SKIN CANCER SURGERY CARE INSTRUCTIONS

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Thank you for choosing our practice for your Mohs micrographic surgery. Your Mohs surgeon, Dr. William Farmer, is dedicated to providing you with the highest standard of care. Please review these instructions carefully to ensure a smooth and successful procedure. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact our office. **Plan to be present for the Mohs surgery for 2-4 hours.**

Driving: For surgeries around the eyes, it is necessary that you arrange for someone to drive you home, as swelling may impair your vision. For other surgeries, a driver is optional but recommended.

We strongly believe that each patient should be treated like a family member in every aspect of their care. We have three goals for surgery: (1) Completely remove all the skin cancer at the site. (2) Provide you with the best possible scar for the skin cancer you had. (3) Keep you as comfortable as possible.

Mohs Micrographic Surgery

Mohs surgery is the most effective treatment for common forms of skin cancer, including basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. It boasts an impressive cure rate of 96-99%, even for cases where other treatments have failed. The procedure is named after Dr. Frederick Mohs, who developed the technique in the 1940's. Your Mohs surgery team will include your Mohs surgeon, a medical assistant, and a histotechnologist who processes the tissue and documents the procedure. Mohs surgery is performed under local anesthesia in our outpatient. Here is what your day may entail.

1. **Arrival:** You'll be escorted to the surgery room with your desired family member(s) if present, where your medical history will be reviewed, and photographs will be taken. This will be your room from start to finish. The Mohs procedure will be discussed with you, answering any questions and obtaining your consent.
2. **Preparation:** After family members have exited to the waiting room, you will be positioned, draped, and made comfortable. The area will be cleaned with an antiseptic, and a local numbing agent (lidocaine) will be carefully injected to deaden the area. This may cause a brief stinging or burning sensation.
3. **Surgical Removal:** The surgeon removes the skin tissue at the site of the skin cancer. Bleeding is controlled with cautery. A temporary dressing is applied while the tissue is processed, during which time the patient relaxes in the surgical room.
4. **Tissue Processing and Margin Evaluation:** The skin tissue is immediately turned into a microscope slide in the in-office lab while the patient waits, which usually takes about an hour. The slide is then examined under the microscope by the Mohs surgeon to ensure all the cancer has been removed from the skin. If cancer cells are seen, the physician will map out exactly where the cancer is and will go back and take out only that exact area. The surgeon will repeat this process until there is no skin cancer seen under the microscope.
5. **Wound Repair:** Once all cancer is removed, the surgeon repairs the wound, aiming to minimize scarring and preserve the natural appearance of the skin. The method of repair depends on the size, shape, and location of the wound and may involve stitches, a skin graft, or allowing the wound to heal naturally.

Pre-Surgery Checklist

- **Bandages:** We recommend paper tape, non-stick pads (e.g., Telfa), and latex-free Coban wrap.
- **Acetaminophen** (e.g., Extra Strength Tylenol): Do **not** use NSAIDs (e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen, aspirin) for pain as they can increase bleeding.
- **Ice Packs:** Prepare small, lightweight packs using crushed ice or frozen peas to be wrapped in a towel for use after surgery.
- **Snacks & Entertainment:** Surgery may take 2-4 hours, so bring food and activities to keep yourself comfortable during the wait.

- **Petroleum Jelly Ointment** (e.g., Vaseline, Aquaphor): To apply after completing prescribed antibiotics, aiding in the healing process. Use a new container to prevent contamination of the wound.
- **Hydrogen Peroxide**: For cleaning dried blood on surrounding skin or clothing, but not for use on the wound itself.
- **Silicone Scar Gel or Tape**: To minimize scarring after the wound has healed.
- **Soft Foods**: For surgeries on the head or neck, choose foods that require minimal chewing.
- **Nicotine Alternatives**: For tobacco users to avoid complications during healing.
- **Straws**: Recommended if surgery is near the mouth.
- **Eye Drops**: Only necessary if surgery is on or near the eyelids.

Days Leading Up to Surgery

- **Medication**: Continue all medications prescribed or directed by your physician, including blood thinners and aspirin. Avoid taking NSAIDS (e.g., ibuprofen, naproxen, aspirin) that are not directed by a physician more than two weeks before surgery as these will further thin your blood.
- **Diet**: Focus on a diet rich in protein and low in junk food. Green vegetables, fruits, and pineapples are recommended to help reduce bruising and swelling. Avoid vitamins and herbal supplements that thin the blood, unless prescribed for a specific condition.
- **Discontinue alcohol and tobacco**. Alcohol thins the blood and tobacco prevents wounds from healing. If you are dependent, please limit as much as you are safely able. Do this for a week prior and don't restart until after you are completely recovered.

Night Before Surgery

- **Mindset**: Approach your surgery with a positive attitude.
- **Diet**: Eat normally and take your medications as usual. This surgery does not require fasting.
- **Home Preparation**: Arrange a comfortable recovery area with pillows, blankets, books, and entertainment.
- **Hygiene**: Shower with a gentle cleanser, avoiding lotions, perfumes, hair products, and other topical products. Do not shave the surgical site, but trimming hair is acceptable, but not necessary.

Morning of Surgery

- **Mindset**: Stay positive. Focus on the fact that you will soon be rid of the burden of this cancer.
- **Diet**: Eat a full meal and take your medications as usual. Delay medications that cause frequent urination until after the procedure if preferred.
- **Clothing**: Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Be prepared for the possibility of bloodstains. Avoid wearing makeup, jewelry, or any cosmetic products.
- **Medications**: Do not take any additional pain medications, alcohol, or anxiety medications before your procedure without informing your physician.

Pre-Surgery Relaxation Techniques

1. **Prayer**: Cancer impacts the body, mind, and spirit. In order for you to heal properly, it is pertinent that you focus on more than just your body. Take time to pray before, during, and after your surgery.
2. **Deep Breathing Exercises**: Take slow, deep breaths in through your nose, allowing your abdomen to rise as you fill your lungs with air. Hold for a moment, then slowly exhale through your mouth. Repeat this for 5-10 minutes, focusing on the sensation of your breath to center your thoughts and reduce anxiety.
3. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**: Starting from your toes and working your way up, tense each muscle group in your body for a few seconds, then slowly release. This exercise helps to relieve physical tension and calm your mind.
4. **Guided Imagery**: Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a peaceful, safe place, such as a beach, forest, or your favorite room. Engage your senses by picturing the colors, smells, and sounds around you. Spend a few minutes immersed in this imagery to reduce stress.
5. **Mindfulness Meditation**: Focus on the present moment by observing your thoughts and sensations without judgment. This can help you stay grounded and avoid becoming overwhelmed by worries about the surgery.