

Introduction to Mohs Micrographic Surgery

In the 1930s, Dr. Frederic Mohs, a surgeon in Wisconsin, applied a technique for evaluating skin cancer microscopically during its removal. The Mohs technique has evolved into an efficient and extremely effective skin cancer treatment allowing the physician to remove as little skin as possible with the highest cure rate, all usually done in a single day office visit.

Meet the Mohs Team

Dr. Nicole Warner is a board-certified Dermatologist and Dermatologic Surgeon who completed an ACGME accredited fellowship in Micrographic Surgery and Dermatologic Oncology (Mohs Surgery). She completed her Medical Degree at the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine where she also went on to complete a residency in Dermatology. She served as chief resident her final year before going on to complete her Mohs fellowship at Geisinger Medical Center. Dr. Warner's clinical interests include Mohs and dermatologic surgery, skin cancer management, and cosmetic dermatology.

The Mohs Micrographic Surgery Team at St. Elizabeth consists of several highly trained individuals who will be involved in your care. In addition to Dr. Warner, there are medical assistants and nurses who are experienced in caring for patients during surgery and laboratory technicians who precisely prepare the tissue for microscopic examination.

What to expect on the day of surgery

Arrive for your scheduled appointment in the morning and plan to spend the whole day with us. Feel free to bring snacks or lunch as well as any reading material. Once checked in, the skin cancer will be outlined and the area will be numbed with a local anesthetic, usually lidocaine (like your biopsy). The outlined skin cancer will then be cut out and taken to the lab. Once the initial part of the procedure is complete, you will head to our waiting room with a bandage over the area.

The removed skin goes to the lab and is examined under the microscope. This process usually takes around an hour but can take longer depending on how the tissue processes. If skin cancer is identified, you will be taken back to the procedure room and the area affected will be removed. You will have to wait again while this area is checked. The process is repeated until the last area checked is cancer free.

Once all the cancer has been removed, we will discuss the best way to repair the hole created by the removal of the skin cancer. Sometimes, we allow the area to heal in by itself, but usually we will use sutures (stitches) to repair the area. Occasionally, we may need to do a skin flap or a skin graft.

Most skin cancers require one to two times for removal, but some may require many more for complete removal. As several stages may be required to fully remove your skin cancer and you should plan on being at the office all day. In rare instances, the patient may have to come back the next day to have the process completed.

Will I have a Scar?

Yes, as almost any form of treatment for skin cancer will leave a permanent scar. However, Mohs surgery preserves as much healthy skin as possible. As a result, the hole created during surgery to remove the skin cancer is as small as possible. Each repair is designed to reconstruct the unique skin cancer hole to give the smallest and least noticeable scar possible. On occasion, a multi-specialty team of doctors may be needed to work in conjunction with the Mohs surgeon to achieve the best result for the patient.

How long will it take to heal?

Usually, you will need to wear a bandage for one to two weeks, but may need to longer depending on the surgery required to remove the skin cancer. During this time, you should take it easy and avoid strenuous physical activity to allow the area to heal. Initially, the incision will be raised and red, but will slowly improve over the next several months. The area will look the worst for the first 2-3 weeks with bruising and swelling expected around the incision and potentially around the eyes if the

surgery is on your face. For this reason, we recommend planning your surgery after any big events or travel plans. The incision will continue to improve over the following 3-6 months and should heal as a fine white line scar wherever stitches were placed.

Will the Surgery be Painful?

A local anesthetic, usually lidocaine, is injected around the skin cancer to numb the skin. A slight discomfort may be experienced at the initial injection site, but once it takes effect and the area is numb, no discomfort is experienced. The numbness will last a couple of hours and additional anesthetic will be injected throughout the day as needed. After the surgery is completed, most patients experience very little discomfort. Any pain can usually be controlled with Tylenol or acetaminophen.

Do I need a driver?

If the procedure is performed on your face, we recommend that you make arrangements to have someone bring you to and from the office. You may have swelling around the eyes or a bandage that obstructs your vision making it unsafe for you to drive yourself. Also, if a sedative is taken you will not be able to drive yourself. Your driver is welcome to stay and keep you company during the procedure. If your surgery is not located on your face, you will be ok to drive yourself to and from the appointment.

Will I have work or activity restrictions?

You should plan to take the day of surgery off work. Most patients return to work the following day, but extra days off may be required depending on the nature of your employment. We can provide you with a work excuse if needed.

We recommend taking it easy for the two weeks following your procedure by avoiding strenuous exercise or physical activity and by limiting any bending or heavy lifting.

Do I take my medications normally before surgery?

Yes, please take all of your normal medications prior to your surgery unless directed otherwise. You may be asked to take an antibiotic once you arrive at your appointment to prevent infection in areas that are considered high risk. If you normally take antibiotics prior to going to the dentist or before procedures, you should take your typical dose before coming to our office.

Please bring an updated list of your medications and allergies to your appointment. If you are on a blood thinner medication, you should continue taking it as directed unless a physician has instructed you otherwise. If you take Coumadin or Warfarin, please bring a copy of your most recent INR or Coumadin level.

Things to know:

- Plan to spend the whole day with us.
- Eat, drink and take all your medications as you normally would.
- Expect bruising and swelling around the surgery site, especially around the eyes if your spot is on your face.
- Showering and washing your hair prior to the appointment is recommended, as bandaging may restrict showering, usually for 48 hours, but may be up to one week.

Your Mohs surgery appointment information.

Date: _____

Time: _____

If you need to cancel or reschedule please let our office know as soon as possible. We kindly ask that you notify our office at least 48 hours in advance.

We look forward to seeing you on the day of your surgery, if you have any questions prior to your appointment, please feel free to contact us at

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