Mohs Surgery

Mohs surgery is a procedure used to treat skin cancer. It is named after its inventor, Dr. Frederic E. Mohs. Specially trained surgeons using the Mohs technique carefully cut away skin cells (*cancerous tissue*) layer by layer. The goal is to remove all cancerous tissue while preserving and minimizing the removal of the healthy skin around it. This keeps scarring to a minimum and allows for a better cosmetic outcome.

Mohs surgery is used to treat the most common types of skin cancer:

- Basal cell carcinoma
- Squamous cell carcinoma.

It is used to treat skin cancer in areas where it is important to save as much of your normal skin as possible. These include the:

- Nose.
- Eyelids.
- Ears.
- Lips.
- Hands.
- Feet.
- Genitals.

The procedure is used mostly if:

- Cancer has returned after another type of treatment.
- The cancer is likely to return.
- The cancerous area is large.
- The area of the cancer has edges that are not clearly defined.
- The cancer is growing swiftly.

THE PROCEDURE

Mohs surgery is usually done as an outpatient procedure. An anesthetic is given to make the affected area numb. Then, a layer of cancerous tissue is removed. It is immediately frozen and examined under a microscope. The surgeon notes the precise location of the cancerous cells. Then, another layer is removed, but only from the area of the cancerous cells. This layer is frozen and examined in the same way. More layers are shaved away, one by one, and examined until no evidence of cancer remains.

The procedure is time-consuming. Just how long it will take, however, depends on how extensive the cancer is. Some surgeons are testing a way to examine the tissue that is removed without having to freeze it first. This could speed up the process.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

- The surgeon might close the wound immediately or let it heal on its own. A large wound could require a skin graft or skin flap.
- The Mohs surgeon might refer you to another surgeon if the wound needs extensive repair.
- There could be some swelling or bruising at the site of the surgery.

BENEFITS

- Mohs surgery has the highest success rate of all skin cancer treatments.
- It offers faster healing times.
- It produces less scarring.

- The cancer is less likely to return after Mohs surgery than it is after other skin cancer treatments.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop a fever of 100.4° F (38.0° C) after the procedure.
- Develop any signs of infection.
- Develop bleeding that is hard to control or stop with pressure.

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