A PATIENT GUIDE
Preparing for Mohs Surgery

> What is Mohs Surgery?
Mohs Micrographic Surgery is a specialized, highly effective technique for the removal of skin cancer. The procedure was developed in the 1930s by Dr. Frederic Mohs and is now practiced throughout the world. Mohs Surgery has been recognized as the skin cancer treatment with the highest reported cure rate.

Mohs Surgery differs from other skin cancer treatments because it allows for the immediate and complete microscopic removal and examination of cancerous tissue. This surgery allows for all "roots" and extensions of the cancer to be eliminated, including those not visible to the naked eye. Mohs surgeons have special training because they act as the physician, surgeon and pathologist at the same time.

> Advantages of Mohs Surgery
Mohs Surgery has the highest cure rate of all the treatments that are available to treat skin cancer (up to 99 percent for some cancers). The tissue is examined while the patient waits, and the surgeon can determine right away if the margins are clear of cancer. Mohs Surgery also spares normal tissue because the cancer is removed in thin layers according to where cancer cells are seen at the margins.

In addition, Mohs Surgery is usually performed in an outpatient surgery clinic and the majority of patients do not have to be admitted to a hospital. Surgery is performed using local anesthesia and the patient is awake during surgery, which avoids many of the risks of general anesthesia.

> When is Mohs Surgery Effective?
Mohs Surgery is effective for treating many types of skin cancer and is most commonly used to treat basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma — the two most common forms of skin cancer. Mohs Surgery is also used to treat a number of rarer skin cancers.

Mohs Surgery is the treatment of choice when the skin cancer:
- Is large
- Has edges that cannot be clearly defined
- Is in an area of the body where it is important to preserve healthy tissue for maximum functional and cosmetic result
- Has recurred or has not been completely removed using other methods
- Is likely to recur if treated by common methods
> What is Mohs Surgery?
Mohs Micrographic Surgery is a specialized, highly effective technique for the removal of skin cancer. The procedure was developed in the 1930s by Dr. Frederic Mohs and is now practiced throughout the world. Mohs Surgery has been recognized as the skin cancer treatment with the highest reported cure rate.

Mohs Surgery differs from other skin cancer treatments because it allows for the immediate and complete microscopic removal and examination of cancerous tissue. This surgery allows for all “roots” and extensions of the cancer to be eliminated, including those not visible to the naked eye. Mohs surgeons have special training because they act as the physician, surgeon and pathologist at the same time.

> Advantages of Mohs Surgery
Mohs Surgery has the highest cure rate of all the treatments that are available to treat skin cancer (up to 99 percent for some cancers). The tissue is examined while the patient waits, and the surgeon can determine right away if the margins are clear of cancer. Mohs Surgery also spares normal tissue because the cancer is removed in thin layers according to where cancer cells are seen at the margins.

In addition, Mohs Surgery is usually performed in an outpatient surgery clinic and the majority of patients do not have to be admitted to a hospital. Surgery is performed using local anesthesia and the patient is awake during surgery, which avoids many of the risks of general anesthesia.

> When is Mohs Surgery Effective?
Mohs Surgery is effective for treating many types of skin cancer and is most commonly used to treat basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma — the two most common forms of skin cancer. Mohs Surgery is also used to treat a number of rarer skin cancers.

Mohs Surgery is the treatment of choice when the skin cancer:
- Is large
- Has edges that cannot be clearly defined
- Is in an area of the body where it is important to preserve healthy tissue for maximum functional and cosmetic result
- Has recurred or has not been completely removed using other methods
- Is likely to recur if treated by common methods
WSUPG is the largest nonprofit multi-specialty physician practice groups in southeast Michigan, with more than 2,000 affiliated physicians providing primary and specialty care.

**MOHS SURGERY**

**How is Mohs Surgery Performed?**

**A Step-by-Step Guide**

1. The visible edges of the cancer are marked on the surface of the skin.
2. The skin around the cancer is numbed with a local anesthetic.
3. The visible portion of the cancer is surgically removed.
4. A thin layer of normal-appearing tissue is removed and divided into sections. The Mohs surgeon color codes each of these sections with dyes and marks the skin to show the source.
5. A map of the surgical site is drawn.
6. A temporary bandage is placed over the wound.
7. The edges of the tissue are examined while the patient waits. The surgeon checks the entire undersurface (margins) of the sections under the microscope.
8. If cancer cells are at the edges of the margins, these are precisely marked on the map.
9. If the margins are positive for cancer, additional anesthetic is injected into the wound. Additional tissue in the areas of positive margins is removed and examined under the microscope.
10. The process is repeated until there is no longer any evidence of cancer at the margins.

**Reconstruction**

After the skin cancer has been removed, there will be a defect (hole) at the site of surgery. The defect can either heal on its own without stitches or is repaired using plastic surgery reconstruction techniques in the clinic on the same day. The Mohs surgeon will present choices for reconstruction to each patient to determine an individual treatment plan.

> What to Expect After Surgery

**Discomfort:** Most patients do not complain of significant pain. Discomfort is usually minimal and ice packs and Tylenol (acetaminophen) are generally used for relief. The surgeon will prescribe stronger pain medications as needed.

**Bleeding and Bruising:** Minimizing physical activity will help decrease the risk of bleeding. Bruising of the area usually fades after one or two weeks. Patients should continue to take any doctor-prescribed blood thinners as directed.

**Infection:** Infection is possible with any type of surgery or injury to the skin. Patients are given written instructions for home wound care to minimize the risk of infection and may also be given a prescription for an antibiotic.

Credit: The American Society for Mohs Surgery

**Scarring:** All types of skin surgery will result in a scar. Reconstructive surgery and proper wound care will help minimize the appearance of scarring. The surgeon may also perform scar revision surgery or treatments after about one month following your Mohs Surgery.

**Nerve Damage/Numbness:** Surgery can damage nerve endings in the skin and lead to numbness in the area. Numbness will often improve over time. For more extensive cancers, there is a slight risk that surgery and reconstruction may damage nerves that can lead to weakness of some of the muscles in the area. The surgeon will discuss all risks with each patient before surgery.

**Incomplete Removal/Recurrence:** The cure rate for Mohs Surgery is very high (up to 99 percent). However, there is a small chance the surgery may not completely remove the cancer, and the cancer may grow back. For this reason, it is strongly recommended Mohs Surgery patients receive routine skin examinations from a dermatologist.

**Knowledge-Powered Medicine**
WSUPG is one of the largest nonprofit multi-specialty physician practice groups in southeast Michigan, with more than 2,000 affiliated physicians providing primary and specialty care.
A PATIENT GUIDE
Preparing for Mohs Surgery

> What is Mohs Surgery?

Mohs Micrographic Surgery is a specialized, highly effective technique for the removal of skin cancer. The procedure was developed in the 1930s by Dr. Frederic Mohs and is now practiced throughout the world. Mohs Surgery has been recognized as the skin cancer treatment with the highest reported cure rate.

Mohs Surgery differs from other skin cancer treatments because it allows for the immediate and complete microscopic removal and examination of cancerous tissue. This surgery allows for all “roots” and extensions of the cancer to be eliminated, including those not visible to the naked eye. Mohs surgeons have special training because they act as the physician, surgeon and pathologist at the same time.

> Advantages of Mohs Surgery

Mohs Surgery has the highest cure rate of all the treatments that are available to treat skin cancer (up to 99 percent for some cancers). The tissue is examined while the patient waits, and the surgeon can determine right away if the margins are clear of cancer. Mohs Surgery also spares normal tissue because the cancer is removed in thin layers according to where cancer cells are seen at the margins.

In addition, Mohs Surgery is usually performed in an outpatient surgery clinic and the majority of patients do not have to be admitted to a hospital. Surgery is performed using local anesthesia and the patient is awake during surgery, which avoids many of the risks of general anesthesia.

> When is Mohs Surgery Effective?

Mohs Surgery is effective for treating many types of skin cancer and is most commonly used to treat basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma — the two most common forms of skin cancer. Mohs Surgery is also used to treat a number of rarer skin cancers.

Mohs Surgery is the treatment of choice when the skin cancer:
- Is large
- Has edges that cannot be clearly defined
- Is in an area of the body where it is important to preserve healthy tissue for maximum functional and cosmetic result
- Has recurred or has not been completely removed using other methods
- Is likely to recur if treated by common methods

> What is Mohs Surgery?

Mohs Micrographic Surgery is a specialized, highly effective technique for the removal of skin cancer. The procedure was developed in the 1930s by Dr. Frederic Mohs and is now practiced throughout the world. Mohs Surgery has been recognized as the skin cancer treatment with the highest reported cure rate.

Mohs Surgery differs from other skin cancer treatments because it allows for the immediate and complete microscopic removal and examination of cancerous tissue. This surgery allows for all “roots” and extensions of the cancer to be eliminated, including those not visible to the naked eye. Mohs surgeons have special training because they act as the physician, surgeon and pathologist at the same time.

> Advantages of Mohs Surgery

Mohs Surgery has the highest cure rate of all the treatments that are available to treat skin cancer (up to 99 percent for some cancers). The tissue is examined while the patient waits, and the surgeon can determine right away if the margins are clear of cancer. Mohs Surgery also spares normal tissue because the cancer is removed in thin layers according to where cancer cells are seen at the margins.

In addition, Mohs Surgery is usually performed in an outpatient surgery clinic and the majority of patients do not have to be admitted to a hospital. Surgery is performed using local anesthesia and the patient is awake during surgery, which avoids many of the risks of general anesthesia.