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## Dermatology Patient Education

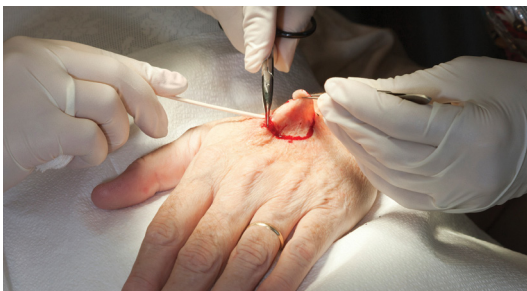
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# Mohs Surgery

Mohs surgery, also called Mohs or Mohs micrographic surgery, is a specialized surgery for removing skin cancer. Your dermatologist will determine if Mohs surgery is appropriate for treating your skin cancer, depending on the type of skin cancer you have and its location.

### WHAT IS MOHS SURGERY?

Mohs surgery is the surgical removal of skin cancer from your skin. It is the only treatment method that allows for confirmation that all skin cancer cells have been removed before you leave the office. This results in the removal of the least amount of normal tissue, while delivering the highest possible success rate.



Mohs surgery on the hand

For certain cases of basal cell carcinoma or squamous cell carcinoma (the most common types of skin cancer), the success rate can be as high as 99 percent, if you have not been previously treated for skin cancer.

Most Mohs surgeons are dermatologists who have completed extensive training in Mohs surgery. Mohs surgeons also have training in pathology, the laboratory examination of samples of body tissue for diagnosis.

### HOW IS MOHS SURGERY PERFORMED?

Mohs surgery is usually performed as an outpatient procedure in a dermatologist's office. You remain awake during Mohs surgery and are given a local anesthetic to numb the surgical area. The use of a local anesthetic instead of general anesthesia, which puts the patient to sleep, is much safer, and it reduces recovery time with fewer side effects.

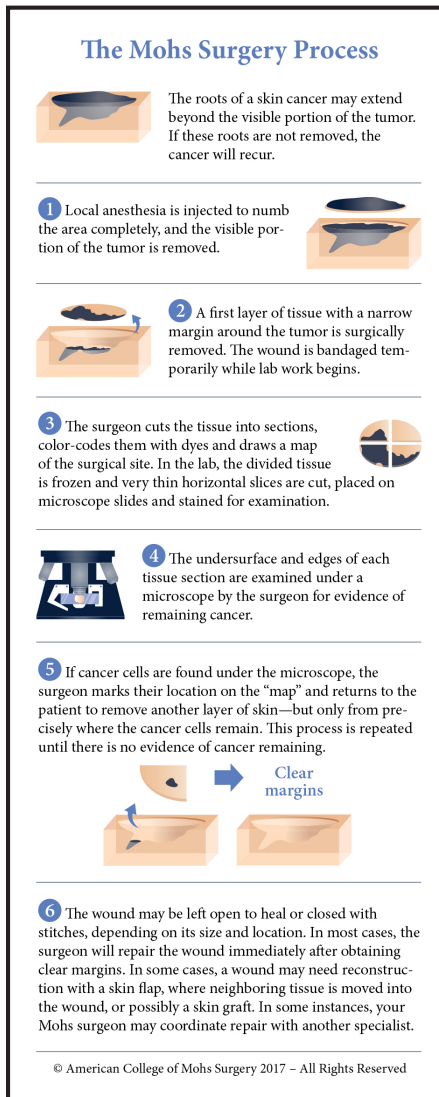
If you are concerned about discomfort during the procedure, share your concerns with the Mohs surgeon to see how he or she can make you feel more comfortable.

Once the anesthesia has taken effect, the Mohs surgeon removes the visible skin cancer. The removed tissue is processed in the lab and examined under a microscope by the Mohs surgeon to determine if there are any cancer cells remaining at the margins (areas at the edge of the visible skin cancer) of the removed tissue. During this time, you wait in the surgical suite or office.

If cancer cells are still present at any edge of the removed tissue, the Mohs surgeon will continue to remove skin specifically at the location where the cancer cells remain. You will have to wait again for the tissue to process and for the Mohs surgeon to examine it under a microscope. This process is repeated until cancer cells are no longer seen.

This technique ensures that the entire skin cancer has been removed, while preserving as much healthy skin as possible. After the Mohs surgery is completed, your Mohs surgeon will discuss with you the best way for the wound to heal. Stitches may be required, or your wound may be dressed to heal on its own. Any surgical repair is usually performed on the same day. Your Mohs surgeon will determine the best approach with you. In certain instances, you may be referred to another medical doctor to repair the wound.

Each review of the removed skin can take up to an hour. In most cases, Mohs surgery can be completed within a day or less.



## WHEN IS MOHS SURGERY THE BEST TREATMENT OPTION?

Most Mohs patients have BCC or SCC. Oftentimes, the skin cancer has developed in sensitive areas, such as on the face, an ear, a finger or toe, or the genitals. Treatment with Mohs surgery is especially important for these areas because the Mohs surgeon removes only the tissue that contains cancer, and you keep as much healthy tissue as possible.

Mohs surgery is useful for other types of aggressive or difficult-to-treat skin cancers, such as those that are rapidly growing, are large, have poorly defined borders or regrow following a previous treatment.

Most insurance plans, including Medicare, cover Mohs surgery.

## WHY DO DERMATOLOGISTS RECOMMEND MOHS SURGERY?

Dermatologists recommend Mohs surgery because it offers the highest success rate for most skin cancers and preserves as much normal, healthy tissue as possible.

## IS MOHS SURGERY THE BEST SKIN CANCER TREATMENT?

While Mohs surgery has many advantages, it is not the right treatment for everyone, or for every skin cancer. Your dermatologist considers many factors before determining if Mohs surgery is right for you. These factors include the type of skin cancer and its location, as well as your overall health.

Your dermatologist will discuss your treatment options and recommend treatment for your skin cancer

A board-certified dermatologist is a medical doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating medical, surgical and cosmetic conditions of the skin, hair and nails. To learn more about Mohs surgery, visit [aad.org/Mohssurgery](http://aad.org/Mohssurgery) or call toll-free (888) 462-DERM (3376) to find a board-certified dermatologist in your area.

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