

What to expect the day of your surgery

Surgery begins early in the morning and is performed in the office, on an outpatient basis. A local anesthetic is injected into the skin to numb the area to be treated. Once the area is numb, the visible cancer is removed as well as a thin layer of tissue around the cancer. A temporary dressing is applied and you are escorted to our waiting area. This part of the procedure takes only 10 to 15 minutes. The tissue is then mapped by the surgeon and taken to our laboratory where it is color coded, processed and examined under the microscope. This part of the procedure takes about one hour while you wait in the reception area. If any additional affected area is identified, the process is repeated until all of the cancer is removed. The number of stages or layers required varies for each patient and depends upon the size and depth of the tumor. Since we cannot predict in advance the number of stages necessary to fully remove the tumor, you should plan on spending the entire morning with us. Once the area is cancer free, Dr. Hacker will discuss the options of wound healing and surgical repair. This may include suturing the area, performing reconstructive surgery using a skin graft or flap, referring out to plastic surgeon, or allowing the area to heal on its own. Following the repair, a dressing is applied and you will be given instructions on wound care and dressing changes.

Preparing for your surgery

Breakfast: Because the procedure is performed under local anesthesia, you may eat breakfast in the morning.

Medications: Please take your daily prescriptions medications prior to surgery, especially, blood pressure medications. Also bring a list of your medications with you, including non-prescriptions drugs.

If you have been prescribed Coumadin, Aspirin, Vitamin E, or Plavix for serious medical reasons, **please continue taking** your medication as ordered. We can still perform your surgery.

Alcohol: Alcohol will also promote bleeding. We ask that you avoid alcoholic beverages 24 hours before and after surgery.

Smoking: Smoking can affect wound healing by diminishing blood supply at your surgery site. We ask that you discontinue smoking 2 days before surgery and 1 week after surgery. If you can not discontinue entirely, cutting back to less than 1 pack per day is highly recommended.

Transportation: It is unnecessary that you make arrangements for someone to drive you to and from our office the day of surgery, unless the area is near the eye and the office has advised you otherwise. This person may stay with you during the waiting period to keep you company between layers. Although you may be finished earlier, please plan on spending the entire morning with us.

Passing Time: We would like to make the time you spend with us as pleasant and comfortable as possible. You may want to bring reading material to occupy your time while waiting for the microscope slides to be processed and examined. Coffee, cookies, and magazines will be available in the reception area.

Attire: We ask that you dress comfortably the day of surgery. The office can be very cold, so please bring a sweater.

After Surgery

If you have any problems at home after surgery, please do not hesitate to call our office. We will be glad to answer any questions. Instructions for wound care will be given to you at the end of your day.

Will I have pain after surgery?

The surgical site may be sore for several days after surgery. If there is any discomfort, Tylenol is usually adequate for relief. Avoid taking aspirin or ibuprofen-containing medications as they may cause bleeding.

Will I have bruising after surgery?

Bruising and swelling are common after surgery. This may not peak until 48 hours following the surgery. We do not recommend planning your surgery date around an engagement where physical appearance is important.

Can I exercise after surgery?

Activities, including exercise or heavy lifting, will be restricted until stitches are removed. The more activity you participate in after surgery, the more likely you may bleed from the surgery site.

Will the surgery leave a scar?

Whenever any form of surgery is performed, there will be a scar. Any scarring is minimized because the Mohs technique removes as little tissue as possible.

Will I need to come back?

Suture removal and wound evaluation is usually performed one week after surgery. Periodic visits at least twice a year to your physician are advisable to monitor for new skin cancers or signs of recurrence from previous procedures. Since statistics show that a patient with skin cancer has a higher chance of developing another one, follow-up is very important.

How can I protect myself from developing more skin cancers?

Here are some helpful hints to avoid the damaging effects of the sun and protect your skin:

1. Regularly and liberally apply a broad spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or greater with UVA and UVB coverage) on a daily basis. Reapply every 2-3 hours during prolonged sun exposure.

2. Cover up with protective clothing, hats, beach umbrellas, etc. even on cloudy days, to minimize unnecessary exposure.
3. Avoid the sun at its most intense hours form 10:00 am to 4:00 pm if possible. If not cover up!

Sun protection is extremely important to minimize further damage to your skin and the risks of development of additional skin cancers. Enjoy the outdoors, but do it wisely.