

Saddleback Dermatology & Laser Center

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What is Mohs Surgery?

Mohs surgery is a specialized technique for removing skin cancer permitting immediate and complete microscopic examination of the excised cancerous tissue. It offers the highest cure rate for skin cancer. ***Our doctors are trained in this specialized technique and are members of the American Society for Mohs Surgery.***

How is Mohs Surgery performed?

1. Local anesthesia is used, similar to when the biopsy was performed. The visible cancer is removed with a thin margin of additional tissue. A diagram including the orientation of the specimen is made by the physician.
2. Next is the waiting period. The technician prepares the specimen on a slide for microscopic review. This is the most time consuming part of the procedure which may require up to an hour to complete.
3. Your physician will then examine the entire surgical margin microscopically. If more cancer is found, more tissue will be removed from that exact location. This process is repeated until clearance is achieved.

How long does it take? Most cases can be completed in three or fewer stages, requiring less than four hours. However, no one can predict how extensive a cancer is in advance.

Will it leave a scar? Yes, however this technique produces the smallest ***possible*** surgical defect.

How is the wound repaired? Your physician will repair the area immediately, or occasionally refer you to another surgeon for repair.

Will I have pain, bruising, or swelling after surgery? Most patients have minimal pain which can be controlled with Tylenol. Some bruising or swelling can occur around the wound, especially near eyes or lips.

How do I prepare for surgery?

Please Do:

- Shower the night or morning before. The surgical site must stay dry for 24-48 hours afterwards.
- Eat breakfast as usual.
- Take your prescribed medications unless otherwise directed. Let us know if you take blood thinners.
- Bring an old blanket and wear warm socks to the office, if you tend to get cold.
- Bring a book or something to do during the waiting period.
- Consider arranging for someone to drive you home after surgery. A bulky dressing will be applied, which in certain locations may partially block your vision or interfere with wearing glasses.

Please Do NOT:

- Unless directed by your doctor, take aspirin, vitamin E and herbal supplements 7 days prior to surgery. Other pain relievers should be avoided 2 days prior since all may cause bleeding. **Tylenol is acceptable.**
- Have caffeine the day of surgery.
- Smoke as this slows healing. Especially DO NOT smoke the day of surgery.
- Drink alcohol in excess prior to or after surgery.
- Wear any make up if you're having facial surgery.

Can I exercise as usual?

No. Physical activity should be limited especially the first few days after surgery and after suture removal (one or two weeks). Excess activity can lead to bleeding, infection, and poor wound healing.