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## Mohs Surgery

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### **What is Mohs surgery?**

Mohs surgery is a specialized treatment for the removal of certain types of skin cancer. The technique, developed by Dr. Frederick Mohs, is the most successful method available to remove skin cancer. Mohs surgery differs from all other methods for treating skin cancer by the use of a detailed mapping technique combined with complete microscopic examination of all tissue margins, allowing your doctor to identify and remove every cancer cell.

### **What are the advantages of Mohs surgery?**

With its detailed mapping and complete microscopic examination of all tissue margins, Mohs surgery allows your doctor to pinpoint areas involved with cancer that are not visible to the naked eye. Even the smallest microscopic “roots” of your skin cancer can be successfully removed, reducing the risk of recurrence. Mohs surgery provides the highest possible cure rate for skin cancer along with the removal of the least amount of normal skin.

### **What are my chances for cure?**

When performed by a fellowship-trained Mohs surgeon, Mohs surgery offers the highest cure rate (up to 99% for basal and squamous cell carcinomas) of any available method for the treatment of skin cancer.

### **Your Mohs surgeons at Westmoreland Dermatology Associates**

Dr. Regis McHugh is a Board Certified Dermatologist and fellowship-trained Mohs surgeon. He received his training in medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, dermatology at Case Western Reserve University, and Mohs Surgery at Columbia University in New York City. Dr. McHugh is a Fellow of the American College of Mohs Surgery.

<http://www.westmorelanddermatology.com/html/mchugh.html>

Dr. Christopher Hunzeker is a Board Certified Dermatologist and fellowship-trained Mohs surgeon. He received his training in medicine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, dermatology at New York University Medical Center, and Mohs Surgery at the Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York in New York City. Dr. Hunzeker is a Fellow of the American College of Mohs Surgery and the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery.

<http://www.westmorelanddermatology.com/html/hunzeker.html>



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### *Preparation for surgery*

#### **One week before surgery**

Continue aspirin if recommended by your medical doctor or cardiologist, but stop aspirin if you are taking it on your own. We strongly advise that you abstain from alcohol and smoking for one week prior to and one week following your surgery. Alcohol increases your risk of bleeding and smoking negatively affects wound healing.

#### **Medications**

Continue any medications prescribed by your doctor. Please come prepared to provide a list of all medications (strength and amount) that you are taking.

Please let us know if you have a:

Pacemaker or defibrillator, or (2) Need for antibiotics before surgery

#### **Plan on Spending the Entire Day**

We cannot predict how many stages will be required to remove your skin cancer. As such, we cannot accurately predict what time your surgery will be completed. Your best bet is to prepare to spend the entire day with us. You may bring a companion with you, however; we would appreciate it if you could limit family and friends to one person due to limited seating. You may require assistance driving home after surgery because the bandages may interfere with your ability to drive safely. If a companion does not wish to stay all day, they can always come and pick you up after the surgery. Bring a book and a lunch, as it may be a long day.

#### **Clothing**

Wear comfortable clothing and consider wearing layers as the operating rooms may be chilly. Also, consider wearing a top with buttons or a zipper so that you can easily remove it when you get home. Pulling a tight shirt collar over your head could potentially loosen the bandage that we apply after your surgery.

#### **Will my insurance cover the cost of surgery?**

We accept assignment of all Highmark and Medicare policies. We are also members of most HMO's and PPO's. Expenses not covered include deductibles and co-payment amounts. We do not want anyone to be denied medical care because of an inability to pay. If you have questions regarding your insurance, please call to speak with our Billing Department.



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### *What to expect the day of surgery*

#### **What will happen the day of surgery?**

You will be taken to the surgery room where your doctor will use a local anesthetic to completely anesthetize (numb) the area around the skin cancer. Mindful of the results of your biopsy report, he will remove the visible cancer and a very narrow margin of surrounding skin. He will then make a map of the area to maintain the proper orientation of the tissue before delivering it to the laboratory. In the lab the technician will freeze, cut and stain the tissue and prepare glass slides. Your doctor will read the slides under the microscope and mark on the map the exact location of any remaining cancer cells. Additional layers of tissue will be taken as necessary until the peripheral and deep margins are completely free of cancer.

Several stages consisting of tissue removal, slide preparation, and microscopic examination may be required. Each stage may take upwards of 1-2 hours. Between stages you will be asked to wait in the patient waiting area while wearing a temporary bandage. The most difficult part of the procedure is often the waiting between stages. Since we do not know in advance how much time is necessary to remove the cancer and repair the wound, we ask that you make no other commitments for the entire day, including the evening.

#### **How many stages will it take to remove my skin cancer?**

There is no way of knowing before surgery how many stages it will take to remove your skin cancer. This is precisely why Mohs surgery is recommended over simply excising the cancer with a standard margin of normal appearing skin. With Mohs surgery, your doctor is able to remove the skin cancer in its entirety without removing unnecessary amounts of uninvolved (normal) skin. The majority of cancers are removed in three stages or less.

#### **Will I be hospitalized?**

NO. Mohs surgery is performed in our office surgical suites located at 419 W. Pittsburgh Street in Greensburg. You will return home the same day.

#### **Can I eat before surgery?**

YES. There is no fasting involved with Mohs surgery. You should eat breakfast or lunch prior to surgery as you normally would. We do have coffee, tea, juice, and crackers in our waiting area for you. Your visit may extend through the lunch hour, so you may want to bring a snack or lunch with you. There are some restaurants nearby that will deliver a meal if you wish. If someone is staying with you, they may go and get something for you since you are asked not to leave the waiting area of our office until your surgical procedure is completed.

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### *After surgery*

#### **Will I have pain after surgery?**

Most patients do not complain of pain after Mohs surgery. If you experience discomfort, you may take Extra-Strength Tylenol. We generally try to avoid aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (eg. ibuprofen, naproxen) as they increase the risk of bleeding. If your pain is not adequately controlled with Tylenol, or you cannot tolerate Tylenol, you may call the office. We have someone on call 24/7.

#### **Will the surgery leave a scar?**

Yes. Any surgical treatment of your skin cancer will leave a scar. However, with the Mohs technique, the least amount of normal skin is removed, thereby minimizing the size of your scar. After the cancer is completely removed, the resulting wound will be repaired by your doctor. There are different methods of repair: (1) to allow the wound heal on its own, (2) to repair the wound with stitches, or (3) to reconstruct the wound with a skin flap or skin graft. The decision regarding the type of repair depends upon the size and location of the wound following removal of your skin cancer. Dr. McHugh and Dr. Hunzeker are trained in reconstructive surgery and will discuss with you your options for repair, emphasizing the safest method that will provide you with the best cosmetic result.

#### **How will I care for my wound after surgery?**

The necessary wound care will depend upon the type of repair. Your doctor and nurse will instruct you on the proper wound care and bandaging after completion of the surgery and written instructions will be provided.

#### **Will I need to come back?**

Yes. You will need to return in one to two weeks to have stitches removed and for your doctor to examine how the wound is healing. After that, of course, all skin cancer patients need at least yearly follow ups.

If you have additional questions please call the office at: 724-837-5810

During normal business hours ask for Joyce Thomas, ext #30.

In the evening calls will be taken by: Rick 724-771-4717 or Jamie 412-554-2626