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Mohs Micrographic Outpatient Surgery for Skin Cancer

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Orthopaedic-Dermatology-Neuroscience
Nursing Division
Dermatology Clinic
The University of Iowa
Hospitals and Clinics

The technical name for the procedure to treat your skin cancer is *Microscopically Controlled Excision* or MOHS surgery. It was developed by Dr. Frederick Mohs in the 1940's. The surgery involves first removing the obvious skin cancer with a margin of surrounding normal tissue. This tissue is then processed into slides for microscopic review by the doctor. After the tissue is examined, it is determined if cancer cells remain and if so, their exact location. At this point, a second layer of tissue is removed and the process is repeated, layer by layer, until the excised tissue is free of cancer. Once the area is cancer-free, the wound is repaired. The major advantages of the Mohs procedure are that it has a high cure rate, and it saves as much normal skin as possible. Other advantages are general anesthesia is not required and hospitalization is rarely necessary.

BEFORE SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS:

Medications:

- Someone must come with you to drive you home. Because this procedure may take all day, you are both encouraged to take something along to occupy your time during waiting periods.
- In a small percentage of cases, admission to the hospital or an overnight stay in a local motel is necessary. It is recommended that you bring enough items with you to spend the night if needed.
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages for 2 days prior to surgery.
- Do not take aspirin* or any aspirin-containing products for 2 weeks prior to your surgery because aspirin hinders the blood's ability to clot. If you are taking aspirin or blood thinners such as Coumadin prescribed by a physician, ask that physician if you can stop temporarily.
- Please be on time for your appointment. A

delay in starting your surgery may delay others as well.

DAY*OF SURGERY:

At home:

- If you have a cold, the flu, a cold sore or a temperature greater than 100° F. or 38° C., call 319-356-1616 and ask for the Dermatology Surgery Resident on-call. It may be necessary to reschedule your surgery.
- Shampoo* your hair. Shower or bathe using an anti-bacterial soap such as Dial soap.
- Men*, please shave your face.
- Do not wear *make-up* or *nail polish*.
- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing, but nothing that you must pull over your head, as this may interfere with your postoperative dressing.
- Take your prescription medications as usual, and bring the bottles with you.
- You may eat your normal breakfast.

At the hospital:

- In the procedure room, you will be asked to put on a hospital gown.
- The physician will explain the procedure in detail and have you sign a permit. This is also an opportunity to ask last minute questions.
- You may be given medications for relaxation or sedation. This medication may make you feel light-headed when sitting, standing, or walking.
- After the surgical prep and drape, the surgical area will be numbed by the local injection of an anesthetic.
- Once the area is numb, the Mohs surgery will begin.
- Your friend or family member may wait in our waiting room during your surgery, and

with you during processing time.

- When the Mohs surgery has been completed, the physician will determine what treatment will be appropriate to repair the surgical wound or if the wound should be allowed to heal without additional surgery.
- If at any time you experience discomfort, report it to the nurse.

AFTER SURGERY:

- The nurse or technician will put on a pressure dressing that must be left on for 2 days. She will teach you how to take care of your wound to promote healing and prevent infection.
- If needed, you may be given a prescription for pain medication or an antibiotic to take at home. Prescriptions may be filled in our hospital pharmacy or in any other pharmacy.

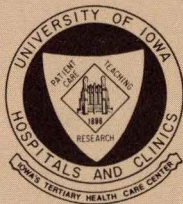
Home instructions:

- Please do not take aspirin for 2 days after surgery unless instructed to do so by your physician. Tylenol, Datril, or other brands of acetaminophen are allowed.
- For the first 2 days after surgery, you should limit yourself to quiet activities.
- If the lip or surrounding area is involved in the procedure, please follow the physician's orders concerning the use of dentures, eating, smoking, gum chewing and talking restrictions.
- If the involved area is on your face or head, sleep with your head elevated on 2 pillows or in a recliner to reduce the amount of swelling or bruising that will occur.
- Please do not drink alcoholic beverages for 2 days after surgery.
- Do not drive a motor vehicle, operate hazardous machinery, make important deci-

sions or sign legal papers for 2 days after having medication for sedation or relaxation.

- The following are *normal changes* that may occur following surgery:
 - a) surgical wound that will scar
 - b) bruising or “black eye”
 - c) aching or soreness in the surgical area
 - d) a tired feeling for a few days
 - e) a small amount of bleeding on your dressing
 - f) temporary, possibly permanent, loss of feeling (sensation) or muscle weakness surrounding the wound.
- If any of the following should occur, contact us:
 - a) *Bleeding* which saturates your dressing. Do not remove the dressing. Hold firm pressure over the dressing for 10 minutes. If bleeding does not stop after holding pressure, continue holding pressure while you call us.
 - b) *Temperature* greater than 100° F. or 38° C.
 - c) *Signs of infections*: redness, swelling, foul-smelling drainage, pain, and heat around the wound.
 - d) Severe nausea and vomiting.
- After surgery, follow-up visits will be required at regular intervals to check your wound site for healing progress and the possible recurrence of cancer.
- If you have any questions or concerns, please call:
319-356-2274 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (Monday thru Friday)
319-356-1616 all other hours, and ask for the Dermatology Surgery Resident “on-call”.

Written by: Twila Finkelstein, R.N.
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