

# Mohs Micrographic Surgery: Preparing for Your Procedure

## **As soon as possible:**

- Take a photo of your biopsy site to bring to your surgery. This can help confirm the location of some tumors in case the biopsy site is difficult to find.
- Smoking has a negative impact on wound healing. If you smoke, cutting back as much as possible (or quitting) for 2 weeks before and after surgery will help your recovery.

## **One week ahead:**

- Please take all prescription medications as usual on the days leading up to surgery. This includes anticoagulant medications. If your doctor has instructed you to take aspirin daily, please continue taking it. If you take aspirin daily but have not been instructed by your doctor to do so, you should stop 7 days prior to surgery.
- You should expect a call confirming your appointment time and date. If you have not received a call by 2 days prior to your appointment, please contact UAB Mohs surgery scheduling at 205-583-8019.

## **Day of surgery:**

- The length of each surgery varies depending on the number of stages required to fully remove your tumor. To ensure that enough time is allowed, it is best to plan for a half-day (4-5 hour) appointment.
- Unless specifically instructed otherwise, there is no need to fast before surgery. We do provide snacks and beverages during your procedure, but patients are encouraged to eat meals as usual on the day of surgery.
- Take all prescription medications as you normally would.
- If you are having surgery on the nose or around the eyes, please bring a driver or arrange for transportation home after surgery. Your bandage can block your vision and interfere with safe driving.
- Review your medical history. Prior to surgery, you will be asked if you have had an artificial heart valve, organ transplant, or joint replacement, and if you have certain known infections.
- Show any biopsy site photos to the nurse and surgeon.

## ***After your surgery:***

### **How to care for your surgical wound:**

1. A pressure dressing may have been applied to reduce bleeding. This should be left on for 24-48 hours. After removing, check for extreme swelling, which could indicate bleeding deep in the wound. If you notice extreme swelling, please notify us immediately at one of the numbers listed on the back. You may start bathing and showering once the bandage has been removed.
2. If bleeding occurs, leave the dressing on and apply firm pressure directly to the site for 20 minutes **CONTINUOUSLY** with your fingertips over a clean cloth. If the bleeding does not stop, notify us at one of the numbers listed on the back or go to your nearest emergency room.
3. In addition to the pressure bandage, Steri-Strips may have been applied to help take tension off the edge of the wound. You should replace the strips at least weekly for a month. Do not use Vaseline because the strips will not stick. When you clean the wound, clean gently over the Steri-Strips.

4. To clean the wound, combine 1 teaspoon of white vinegar and 1 cup of water. Soak a cotton ball, cotton swab, or soft cloth in the solution. Saturate the wound for about 2 minutes. Avoid vigorous rubbing; pat the area dry. Clean the wound twice a day until healed.
5. If Steri-Strips were NOT applied to your incision, you should apply Vaseline to the wound at least two times a day, cleaning the wound first. This will help prevent wound drying and scabbing. Cover the Vaseline with a bandage or Band-Aid. Try to rotate the position of the Band-Aids to help prevent skin irritation.
6. If your wound comes open, call us as soon as possible. Check your wound daily for evidence of infection. Extreme tenderness, redness, or drainage of yellow material indicates a possible wound infection. You should expect a moderate amount of tenderness.
7. At the time of surgery, your doctor will tell you when the sutures should be removed, if at all. Sutures on the head and neck are generally removed within 7 days. Sutures on the arms, legs, and torso are generally removed within 14 days.
8. Although your wound may appear mostly healed in 1-2 weeks, it will take 3 months for complete healing. During that time you should avoid activities such as exercise, weightlifting, and yoga, which can cause excessive tension at the surgical site. By limiting tension on the wound for the first 3 months after surgery, it will help minimize spreading and widening of your scar. (This does not apply to wounds above the shoulder.)
9. Your scar may be very noticeable initially, but over time (usually several months), the pink color will fade and irregularities will become smoother. Avoid exposing the scar to direct sunlight, which can prolong the redness and cause pigmentation.
10. If you experience pain after your procedure, we recommend taking 2 Tylenol (acetaminophen) by mouth every 6 hours. If you are still experiencing pain, we recommend also taking Advil (ibuprofen), up to 800mg every 8 hours, provided that you have no problems taking Tylenol and Advil together. If the pain continues, please call your doctor to discuss pain management.

## **Caring for a skin graft or flap:**

In order for your skin flap or graft to survive, it needs good blood supply. While new blood vessels for your skin graft are forming, avoid anything that may cause friction to the graft site. Friction can disrupt the newly forming blood vessels and prevent the graft from surviving. Listed below are some guidelines for graft care:

**DO** keep the skin graft elevated. If the skin graft is on your face, you should sleep propped up on 2 pillows. This will also help reduce pain and swelling. The color of your graft should be purple to reddish-pink. A skin graft that has turned black may be partially attached or not attached at all. We will be able to determine if your skin graft has survived when you return for your follow-up visit.

**DO NOT RUB, SCRATCH, OR SLEEP ON THE SKIN GRAFT OR FLAP.** This may cause it to detach. Don't do any bending or heavy lifting for two weeks following your surgery. Don't smoke, as smoking causes blood vessels to constrict, thus limiting the blood supply to your skin graft. If you can't quit smoking, try to cut back.

**Do not hesitate to call our office if any serious problems or questions arise.**

**Monday through Friday 8 am to 5 pm: Call the nurses desk at 205.801.8426, or 205.583.8067, or 205.801.7588.**

**From 5 pm to 8 am and on weekends/holidays: Call UAB Paging at 205.934.3411 and ask the operator to page the dermatology resident on call.**