

Mohs Surgery FAQ

What is Mohs Surgery?

Mohs surgery is a highly specialized surgical treatment for the removal of skin cancer and is named after its founder, Dr. Fredric Mohs. The technique involves the controlled removal of the skin cancer and its microscopic examination. This is accomplished by keeping the tissue mapped out and oriented through the entire process of the procedure. The result is the minimal amount of tissue loss while ensuring all the cancer is removed.

Why choose Mohs Surgery?

By keeping the tissue mapped out and oriented, Dr. Ricks can microscopically identify areas of remaining cancer and remove the cancer in a limited and controlled fashion. Thus, cancer that may have tiny strands can be removed resulting in the highest possible cure rate.

What are the cure rates?

The cure rate for Mohs surgery is 98-99%, the highest of any possible treatment method. For tumors that have been treated before, the rate is approximately 95-98%, well above the cure rate of standard methods.

Will I be hospitalized?

No. Mohs surgery is an office-based procedure.

What happens the day of surgery?

Prior to arrival: You should eat a normal breakfast. You should take any medications that you would normally take in the morning. Our Mohs surgery waiting room has recliners, a television, coffee, water and snacks. Plan on being here for the entire day, make no other commitments; bring medications that you would take during this time. To make the time as comfortable and pleasant as possible, feel free to bring reading material to occupy your time. You may opt to bring a lunch or have a companion go out and pick up some food for you. Finally, you should have a driver available to drive you home after the procedure.

Upon Arrival: Your appointment will be scheduled early in the morning. You will be escorted into the procedure room by a nurse. Dr. Ricks will come in, review the chart, and talk to you about the procedure. The surgical site will be identified and confirmed by you, a photograph will be taken, and the area will be anesthetized (numbed). After a few minutes, Dr. Ricks will drape the area and remove the visible cancer and a thin layer of tissue. The tissue is mapped, oriented, and taken to the in-office laboratory where the tissue is processed. The surgical site is covered with a temporary dressing and you will be taken to the Mohs surgery waiting room.

The initial procedure will take approximately 20 minutes; however, it takes 30-60 minutes to process the tissue in the lab. The prepared slides are then microscopically reviewed. Several stages (trips to the procedure room) may be required to clear the cancer; most cancers are cleared in 1-3 stages. Once all the cancer is removed, Dr. Ricks will surgically repair the wound which generally takes 30-60 minutes.

Will the surgery leave a scar?

Yes. Any treatment for skin cancer will leave a scar. However, since Mohs surgery removes the smallest amount of healthy tissue while giving the highest cure rate, scarring is minimized. After the cancer is removed, Dr. Ricks may allow the wound to heal on its own, repair the wound in a straight line, repair the wound with a flap, or use tissue from other parts of the body and place a skin graft. The type of repair will be determined by the location, size and shape of the defect.

Will my insurance cover the cost?

We accept Medicare, Medicaid, and most other insurance plans. We will make every effort to notify you if we are not contracted providers with your insurance plan, but remember, it is your responsibility to understand your own insurance requirements and benefits. Depending on your insurance coverage, your policy may cover part or all of the surgical charges. If you have questions regarding your coverage, please contact your insurance carrier. If you have questions regarding your bill, call (785)408-5800.

After Surgery

Will I have pain after the surgery?

Most patients do not complain of pain following surgery. The anesthesia will wear off after 3 hours; any discomfort is usually controlled by alternating extra strength Tylenol and Ibuprofen. For larger procedures, Dr. Ricks may prescribe a pain medication.

Are there restrictions after the surgery?

Yes. You should limit your physical activity the week following surgery. Minimize activity that will raise your heart rate and blood pressure. The night of the surgery, you will want to keep the area elevated.

Will I need to come back?

Yes. Dr. Ricks usually likes to see you back at the time of suture (stitch) removal. In addition, he may want to see you at 6 weeks to re-evaluate the scar. After 6 weeks, you will return for a routine follow-up with your primary dermatologist. Routine skin checks are mandatory as your risk of skin cancer is higher if you have a prior history of skin cancer.

Can I protect myself from developing more skin cancer?

You can lessen your chances of developing another skin cancer by: a) using sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, b) reapply sunscreen every 2 hours, c) wear a wide brimmed hat, d) avoid sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., e) avoid tanning beds, and f) protect yourself on cloudy days – ultraviolet light passes through clouds.

Why Dr. Matt Ricks?

Dr. Ricks is the only fellowship trained Mohs surgeon in NE Kansas outside of the Kansas City Metro area. He is a native Topekan who returned to Kansas in July 2009 after 24 years of military service. He completed medical training at the Uniformed Services University in Bethesda, Maryland; Dr. Ricks completed residency training in dermatology at Brooke Army and Wilford Hall USAF Medical Centers in San Antonio, Texas and fellowship training in Mohs Micrographic Surgery with Drs. Pearson Lang and Joel Cook at the Medical University of South Carolina – one of the premier training programs in the country.