

Ask Dr. Mikell
By Dr. Oswald Mikell

Dr. Oswald Mikell, MD • Dermatology Associates of the Lowcountry

American Board of Dermatology | American Board of Cosmetic Surgery | Physician of the Year 2008

Mohs Skin Surgery

Mohs micrographic surgery is used to treat skin cancer and is often cited as having the highest cure rate for the most common types of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma, especially for recurrent tumors and those in areas with higher recurrence rates.

Q: What is Mohs Surgery?

A: Mohs micrographic surgery is a state-of-the-art procedure for skin cancer treatment. It's both unique and precise in that instead of removing the whole clinically visible tumor and a large area of normal-appearing skin around it, the Mohs surgeon removes the minimum amount of healthy tissue while totally removing the cancer. Thin layers of tissue are removed and examined under a microscope for malignant cells. When all areas of tissue are tumor-free, the surgery is complete. The concept is to achieve cancer free margins by taking the least amount of normal skin.

Q: How do you determine if you are a candidate for Mohs Surgery?

A: The Mohs technique is appropriate when the cancer is in a sensitive area where it is important to preserve healthy tissue for maximum functional and cosmetic results - such as the eyelid or the tip of the nose. In addition to effectively treating previously treated recurring cancer, Mohs also effectively treats cancer that is growing rapidly or uncontrollably.

Q: What is the success rate for Mohs?

A: Mohs surgery has the highest success rate of all treatments for skin cancer - up to 99 percent.

Q: Does Mohs Surgery require a hospital stay?

A: This procedure is done under local anesthesia, and nearly all patients can be managed on an outpatient basis. Local anesthesia is administered around the area of the tumor. Typically, the procedure starts early in the morning and can be completed the same day, depending on the extent of the tumor and the amount of reconstruction necessary.

Q: Is post-op follow-up required?

A: Post-surgical check-ups are recommended in order to monitor the patient's progress and spot any possible cancer recurrence in a timely manner. Since it is likely that two out of every five patients with one skin cancer will develop another within five years, follow-up is extremely important for early detection of any new lesions.

Q: Do only specialists perform Mohs surgery?

A: Yes, this procedure is performed by dermatologic surgeons who are experienced and trained in surgery and pathology of skin tumors, and often in reconstruction of defects from removal of skin tumors.

Dr. Oswald Mikell is a Fellow of the American Society for Mohs Surgery, and is Certified by the American Board of Cosmetic Surgery. If you have questions and want to learn more about Mohs Microscopic Surgery call Dermatology Associates of the Lowcountry (843) 689-5259 (Hilton Head) or (843) 705-0840 (Bluffton / Okatie) to schedule a consultation.