

You are scheduled for Mohs surgery to remove a skin cancer. This information will help you prepare. Please read it over before your surgery date and call us with any questions.

### What to Expect on Surgery Day

- Mohs surgery is done in stages, in our office, using local (numbing) anesthesia — you will be awake.
- Plan for the whole day. Please block out at least 4 to 6 hours — removing all the cancer and closing the wound can take that long, sometimes more, depending on how much tissue needs to be checked.
- We remove a thin layer of skin, then examine it under a microscope while you wait. If any cancer cells remain, we remove another layer from just that spot and check again — repeating until the margins are clear.
- We can't know the final wound size or how it will be repaired until all the cancer is removed. The visible spot on your skin is often just part of a larger area under the surface.
- Once the cancer is fully removed, we'll discuss the best way to close the wound — stitches, a flap, a skin graft, or letting it heal on its own — and take care of it that same day in most cases.
- **If your surgery is on the scalp, we may need to shave some hair around the area. This helps us see the surgical site clearly and lowers the risk of infection.**

### Keep Taking These Medications As Prescribed

- Warfarin (Coumadin) — if you take this, have your INR checked within 3 days before surgery and let us know the result
- Clopidogrel (Plavix), apixaban (Eliquis), rivaroxaban (Xarelto), dabigatran (Pradaxa), or other prescribed blood thinners

*Continue these unless the doctor who prescribed them tells you to stop. Stopping on your own raises your risk of a stroke, heart attack, or blood clot — a risk that is far more serious than the small amount of extra bleeding we manage easily during surgery.*

### About Aspirin

- **Taking aspirin for general prevention, not prescribed by a cardiologist? Stop before surgery.**
- Aspirin specifically prescribed by a cardiologist or other doctor (for example, after a heart attack, stent, or stroke)? Keep taking it unless that doctor says to stop.

### Supplements That Can Increase Bleeding

These are optional to stop and not dangerous to continue — pausing them can help reduce minor bruising, if it's safe for you to do so.

### Ask Your Prescriber About Pausing These (at Least 5 Days Before)

Fish oil / omega-3 • Vitamin E (high-dose) • Ginkgo biloba • Garlic supplements • Ginseng • St. John's wort • Turmeric / curcumin

### Please Tell Us Before Surgery If Any of These Apply to You

- You have a pacemaker or implantable defibrillator (ICD)
- You have a prosthetic heart valve, or have had endocarditis (a heart valve infection) in the past
- You have a prosthetic joint (hip, knee, etc.)
- You are on immune-suppressing medicine or have had an organ transplant
- You have a bleeding disorder (such as von Willebrand disease) or a history of heavy bleeding after past surgery/dental work
- You get frequent cold sores or fever blisters, especially if your surgery is near your mouth or nose
- You have had an allergic reaction to numbing medicine, latex, adhesive tape, or antibiotic ointment
- You currently have a fever, cold, active infection, or open wound near the surgery site

**Call our office, before your surgery date, at [\(512\) 786-3498](tel:5127863498) if any of these apply to you.**

### Antibiotics Before Surgery

- Most patients do not need antibiotics before or after this surgery — research shows they don't lower infection risk for typical procedures. A single dose is sometimes used for specific situations, like certain heart valve or joint conditions combined with an infected site, or larger nose/ear reconstructions. Tell us ahead of time if these conditions apply to you.
- Sometimes we place a tiny amount of antibiotic directly in the numbing medicine during surgery — a different, very low-dose approach shown to help lower infection risk, and not the same as taking antibiotic pills.

## Smoking and Vaping

- Nicotine narrows blood vessels and raises the risk of poor healing or tissue loss, especially with a flap or graft repair.
- If you smoke or vape, stopping 4 weeks before surgery gives the biggest benefit — but even 24 to 48 hours of not smoking helps your skin heal better.

## The Day of Your Surgery

- Eat a normal meal and take your regular medications as usual, including blood pressure medicine, unless we've told you otherwise. You do not need to fast — an empty stomach can make you feel lightheaded during the procedure.
- **Wear loose-fitting, comfortable clothing with a button-front or zip-front top (avoid white or good dress clothes, since minor spotting is possible). Bring a sweatshirt, jacket, or light blanket — waiting periods can take a while and rooms are often kept cool.**
- Bring something to pass the time — a book, tablet, or headphones — plus a snack and water for the waiting periods between stages.
- **Arrange a driver if:** your surgery is near your eye, you are having sedation, or you feel more comfortable not driving yourself home.
- If you feel anxious about needles or the procedure, tell us ahead of time — we have options like oral anti-anxiety medicine to help you feel more comfortable. Please arrange a driver if you plan to use one.

## Before You Leave Home

- Shower and wash your hair the morning of surgery, since you may need to keep the area dry for a day or two afterward.
- Avoid alcohol for 24 hours before surgery — it can thin your blood and interact with anesthesia.
- Bring your insurance card, ID, and a list of your current medications and supplements.

## If Your Surgery Is Near Certain Areas

- **Eyes:** Bandages can be large and bulky and may temporarily block part of your vision. Bruising and swelling can spread to both eyes. A driver is strongly preferred.
- **Nose:** Expect swelling and stuffiness for a few days, making it harder to breathe through your nose — breathe through your mouth, and avoid blowing your nose hard.
- **Lips or Mouth:** Plan on soft foods while stitches are in — avoid hard, crunchy, or chewy items, and let hot food or drinks cool first since numbness can mask a burn.
- **Ears:** The bandage may briefly affect hearing and can interfere with glasses — have a backup plan for the first few days.
- **Hands or Wrists:** Remove all rings, watches, and jewelry beforehand — swelling can make them hard to remove later. Arrange help at home if it's your dominant hand.
- **Lower Legs or Feet:** Healing is slower here — expect longer activity limits and elevation than with other sites, and wear loose, open shoes that won't rub a bandage.

## Frequently Asked Questions

- **Will it hurt?:** You'll feel a quick pinch or sting when we numb the area — after that, you should feel pressure and movement, but not sharp pain. Tell us right away if you feel anything sharp so we can add more numbing medicine.
- **Can someone come with me?:** Yes, most patients bring a family member or friend to wait with them between stages, though they will not be in the room with you during the procedure itself.
- **What if all the cancer isn't removed by the end of the day?:** This is uncommon, but if a very large area is involved, we may need to schedule a second day or refer you to a specialist for a more complex repair. We'll keep you informed at every stage.
- **Can I take my regular vitamins and medications?:** Yes — only the specific supplements and medications discussed in this sheet need special attention. Take everything else as usual, unless we've told you otherwise.

## Consent and Questions

Before surgery, we'll review and sign a consent form covering the procedure, reconstruction options, and risks (bleeding, infection, scarring, nerve changes, recurrence, and rarely a second procedure or referral). This is a good time to ask any remaining questions.

## Quick Checklist Before Your Surgery Date

- ☐ Confirmed I keep taking my blood thinners / heart or blood pressure medicine as prescribed, unless my doctor said to stop
- ☐ Talked to my prescriber about pausing any supplements listed above, if it's safe and appropriate for me
- ☐ Called the office about any special conditions or surgery sites listed in this sheet that apply to me
- ☐ Arranged a driver, if my surgery or situation calls for one
- ☐ Planned comfortable, loose clothing and packed a sweatshirt or blanket for waiting periods
- ☐ Packed a snack, water, and something to keep me occupied during the day
- ☐ Cleared my schedule for the full day and arranged any help I'll need at home afterward