

LOUISIANA  
MOHS & SKIN SURGERY

CAITLIN G. ROBINSON, MD



INFORMATION FOR  
MOHS SURGERY PATIENTS

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## **What is Mohs surgery?**

Mohs micrographic surgery is a highly specialized technique for the removal of skin cancers that provides a high cure rate while also preserving as much normal skin as possible, thereby minimizing the size of the resulting scar. Mohs surgery is named in honor of Dr. Frederic Mohs, the surgeon who developed the technique. The method is different from all other methods of treating skin cancer by the use of detailed mapping techniques and complete microscopic examination of all the surgical margins. By using this technique, the Mohs surgeon can precisely pinpoint cancer that would otherwise be invisible to the naked eye. Mohs surgery is the gold standard for treatment of skin cancers on the head and neck, other areas where skin preservation is important, or in cases where the skin cancer is considered large or aggressive.

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## **What are my chances for cure?**

Mohs surgery results in a cure rate over 99% for most cancers, even when other forms of treatment have failed. Other methods of treatment offer only a 50% chance of success if previous treatments have failed.

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## **What happens on the day of surgery?**

- Your surgery will be scheduled early in the day. This allows us to continue the surgical steps throughout the entire day, if necessary.
- Our surgical staff will take you into a surgical room, where Dr. Robinson will meet with you. At this point, the area around the skin cancer will be anesthetized.
- Once the area is numb, the visible skin cancer and a thin margin of normal appearing skin will be removed.
- The bleeding will be stopped using cauterization. During this step, you may smell a burning odor.
- The tissue is carefully mapped, coded, and taken to our laboratory, where the technician will immediately process the tissue and make microscope slides.

- A temporary dressing is placed over your wound, and you are allowed to return to the waiting room.
- It takes about 1 hour to process the tissue and interpret the slides, sometimes longer depending on the size and nature of the skin cancer.
- If cancer is seen at the margin during the microscopic examination, its location is mapped out and another thin layer of additional tissue is excised for microscopic examination. This is called an additional “stage” or “layer.”
- Most cancers are removed in three stages or fewer, but rarely, more than three are needed to completely remove the cancer.
- Due to the unpredictable nature of Mohs surgery, **we ask that you plan to be in the office for the whole day and make no other commitments.**
- Once the cancer is fully removed, the patient will return to the surgical room, where next steps will be discussed. There are three choices for repair, in general.
  1. Repair the wound with stitches in a line
  2. Reconstruct the wound with a flap or graft
  3. Leave the wound to heal without stitches
- Depending on the location, patient preference, and size of the surgical defect, the doctor and patient will decide which repair will provide the best functional and cosmetic outcome to the patient.
- If stitches are placed, these are typically removed 1-3 weeks after surgery.
- Most surgeries require a period of rest **with no exercise or heavy lifting for 1-2 weeks** following surgery. We also ask that you **do not travel long distances or on an airplane for 3 days** following the surgery.

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### **What will my wound care instructions be?**

Your wound care instructions will depend on how your wound is repaired. We try to make wound care as easy as possible for each patient. We will counsel you at the end of the appointment, and we will also provide you with a wound care instruction sheet before you leave.

## What can I expect after surgery?

- Swelling and bruising around the surgical site, resolving over the following week or two
  - Numbness around the surgical site, generally resolving over time
  - Infection is rare
  - Mild to moderate pain, usually relieved by Tylenol and/or ibuprofen
    - If severe, a prescription may be given
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## Will the surgery leave a scar?

Yes - any form of treatment will leave a scar, though Mohs will result in the most minimal of scars. Dr. Robinson always aims to provide the best cosmetic outcome to every patient.

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## Will I need to come back after the surgery?

If stitches are placed, you will likely need to return to clinic for stitch removal. If you cannot return due to distance or scheduling conflicts, please let our team know so that we may make accommodations for you. You also should follow-up with your dermatologist every six months to one year for regular full body skin exams to monitor your skin for potential new cancers.

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## How can I prevent more skin cancers?

The best protection from skin cancer is avoidance of the harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun. Patients who have developed one skin cancer often develop more at a later time. Protect your skin from further damage by wearing a high SPF sunscreen with UVA/UVB protection, avoiding the sun during the peak hours of the day (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.), and wearing sunglasses and a broad brimmed hat. Regular check ups with your dermatologist are important to monitor for new skin cancers.



## **Day of Surgery To-Do List:**

- Take all prescription medications, including blood thinners
- Bring a list of current medications
- Eat a normal breakfast unless instructed otherwise
- Avoid wearing makeup, lotion, or perfume
- Bring snacks, drinks, and possibly a lunch
- Bring something to do (book, iPad, crossword, etc.)
- Dress comfortably, and bring a sweater or jacket
- Plan on being in our office for most of the day
- Arrange a ride or have someone accompany you, when possible

### **Will my insurance cover Mohs surgery?**

Our clinic accepts most insurance plans and Medicare. Most health plans will cover Mohs surgery, though coverage amount may vary. Our billing team will contact your insurance company the week prior to the surgery to ensure coverage, and we will call you before your appointment to confirm any deductible that you may need to pay on day of surgery.

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### **Can a family member or friend come with me to my appointment?**

We encourage you to bring someone with you to your appointment. This guest may sit with you while you wait but will return to the waiting room during the surgery, unless the patient is a minor or requires an attendant.

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### **Does Dr. Robinson perform other types of skin surgery?**

Dr. Robinson performs other procedures in her office, including but not limited to:

- Wide local excision of skin cancers that do not require Mohs surgery
- Surgical treatment of melanoma
- Excision of benign lesions
- Skin biopsies, including those in difficult or sensitive locations

# ABOUT THE DOCTOR

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## Caitlin G. Robinson, M.D.

Dr. Caitlin Robinson, a native of Monroe, is north Louisiana's first local ACMS fellowship-trained Mohs surgeon and dermatologist. She is double board-certified in dermatology and micrographic dermatologic surgery by the American Board of Dermatology.



After graduating from Neville High School, Dr. Robinson left home to attend the University of Georgia, where she graduated summa cum laude with a double major in Biology and Psychology. She returned to Louisiana for medical school at LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, where she was inducted into the prestigious Alpha Omega Alpha honor society and graduated with highest honors. She spent a surgical & medical intern year in Seattle at Virginia Mason Hospital and then moved to Houston to complete dermatology residency at UT Houston/MD Anderson Cancer Center, where she received extensive training in skin cancer diagnosis and management. After residency, she had the honor of being accepted into the micrographic dermatologic surgery fellowship at the University of California San Francisco, during which she underwent intensive training in Mohs and reconstructive surgery. After training, Dr. Robinson moved with her husband to Colorado Springs, where she practiced Mohs surgery in a private practice setting for 3 years before establishing her practice in Monroe.

Dr. Robinson is happy to be back home in northeast Louisiana to serve her community. She specializes in Mohs surgery, skin cancer detection, and the treatment of high risk and rare skin cancers, such as Merkel cell carcinoma.

In her free time, Dr. Robinson enjoys traveling, reading, painting, and spending time with her family.