

Skin Cancer Removal and Repair

Skin cancer surgery involves removing the cancer/suspected cancer, as well as a margin of normal tissue around the cancer. This can lead to a larger scar or ‘hole’ than initially anticipated.

Risks of skin cancer surgery include general risks of surgery such as bleeding, infection, and scarring. These are rare, and can usually be dealt with easily in the office. Very rarely a subsequent surgery or intravenous antibiotics are necessary.

Scarring is a normal part of healing, but can have unwanted consequences. This is most evident around the nose, eyes, and mouth, as it can lead to an unsightly appearance and an obvious deformity or functional problem. Steps will be taken to minimize the degree of scarring. This may entail rotating nearby tissue or even a graft of tissue from somewhere else on the body.

Occasionally, nerves will need to be removed along with the skin cancer. This can lead to numbness of parts of the face, scalp, or ear, or even partial paralysis of a region of the face.

The possibility of having residual cancer left behind also exists, but is also fortunately quite rare. If it does occur, it may necessitate another surgery, or, very infrequently, radiation treatment.

It is recommended that you do not do any strenuous activity for one week after surgery. This minimizes the risk of bleeding and unsightly scarring. You can take a shower two days after surgery and get the incision site wet. Avoid scrubbing the area. Instead, just allow the water to run over the area. Sutures, if present, are removed about a week after surgery in the office. In the days and weeks after surgery, keep the incision moist with Vaseline or Dr. Rogers Restore ointment. Also, minimize sun exposure to the scar for several months to optimize healing.