

SURGERY OPTIONS FOR MELANOMA

Surgery to remove melanoma is the standard initial treatment!

Melanoma is the most dangerous type of skin cancer. While only 4% of skin cancers are melanoma, the disease accounts for about 75% of all skin cancer deaths and the American Cancer Society estimates that 73,870 new cases of melanoma will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year.

Surgery to remove melanoma is the standard initial treatment. The tumor and a portion of normal tissue surrounding the tumor, called the margin, must be removed to reduce the chance that any cancer remains. Later stages require more extensive treatment.

This resource is intended to help educate patients on what is melanoma, types of surgery and associated risks.

01 | What is Melanoma

Melanoma is a kind of cancer that starts in the cells that produce the pigment that gives your skin its color, known as melanocytes.

02 | Types of Surgery

The most common types of surgery used to treat melanoma include:

- *Simple Excision:* This surgery takes out the melanoma and a little of the tissue around it. This procedure can result in a complete cure of most patients with thin melanomas (stage 1).
- *Mohs surgery:* A small section of apparently normal skin beyond the visible melanoma is removed and looked at under a microscope. If abnormal cells are identified, another small section is removed and this process continues until the cells removed no longer look abnormal.
- *Wide local Excision:* this excision is used to decrease the chance of local recurrence. A wide

excision, usually 1-2 cm, is made around the original melanoma site, and the tissue is sent to the pathologist for evaluation.

- *Sentinel lymph node biopsy:* This surgery removes the first lymph node that the cancer may have spread to from the tumor. If this lymph node doesn't have any cancer cells, then you may not need to have more lymph nodes removed.

03 | Risks

Risks of surgery to remove melanoma include:

- Infection
- Scarring
- Bleeding
- Rejection of skin graft

When melanoma is caught early, and can be removed by surgery, chances for successful treatment are much higher. For additional resources on melanoma surgery, please visit: www.cancer.org.

Did You Know?
Current estimates are that 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime

References

<https://www.aad.org/media-resources/stats-and-facts/conditions/skin-cancer>

<http://www.cancer.org/cancer/skincancer-melanoma/overviewguide/melanoma-skin-cancer-overview-treating-surgery>

<http://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/melanoma/melanoma-treatments>