

# What is Mohs?

## The Man, the Myth, the Lesion

**W**hat is Mohs? Do the letters stand for something, or is it just a hardness scale for rocks and minerals that is taught in school? Hopefully, this article will help reveal what Mohs, specifically Mohs surgery, really is: a time-tested and state-of-the-art surgical treatment for common skin cancers.

### The Man – Frederic E. Mohs, M.D.

When you think of Burlington, Wisconsin, you may think of professional quarterback Tony Romo. You may also think of the actor Greg Kinnear, who plays the U.S. president in the series *24*. Perhaps you would like to learn about someone new, someone who revolutionized the treatment of common skin cancer. This man may be one of the most remarkable people to come from Burlington: Dr. Frederic E. Mohs.

Born in 1910, Dr. Mohs was ahead of his time. As a medical student in Wisconsin, he used his laboratory skills to develop a technique to both remove and analyze skin cancers under the microscope. This was a ground-breaking technique that allowed his first patient to walk into the office with a common skin cancer on the lip, and walk out with confidence the cancer was gone. Mohs surgery is named in honor of Dr. Frederic E. Mohs and his great discovery of a specialized technique for skin cancer removal.

## The Myth – Not All Skin Cancer is Melanoma

Skin cancers come in multiple varieties. It is a myth that all skin cancers are melanoma. Although accounting for about 75 percent of all skin-cancer deaths, melanoma is the third most common skin cancer. The most common skin cancer is basal cell carcinoma, followed by squamous cell carcinoma. Although melanoma may be the deadliest form of skin cancer, fortunately the majority of common skin cancers are rarely life threatening—these skin cancers are the most frequently treated with Mohs surgery. With over a million cases of skin cancer detected each year in the United States, chances are you know someone affected by skin cancer. It is even likely that you know someone who has had Mohs surgery for skin cancer.

## The Lesion – Mohs Surgery for Skin Cancer

In Mohs surgery, it's all about the lesion, the skin cancer. The lesion may be a skin cancer on the nose, the lip, the ear, the eyebrow, or elsewhere on the head, neck, hands, or other important locations. Under local anesthesia, the skin cancer is surgically removed and microscopically examined. The resultant defect is repaired or reconstructed. Although efficient, Mohs surgery isn't just about convenience. Mohs surgery is an extremely thorough and complete process of skin cancer removal followed by reconstruction, offering the highest success rate for common skin cancer treatment. A Mohs surgeon receives extensive fellowship training in Mohs surgery beyond the normal dermatology residency.

Dr. Frederic E. Mohs was ahead of his time when he developed this state-of-the-art technique. His dedication and ingenuity live on as Mohs surgery progresses as both a highly-efficient and effective technique in the treatment of skin cancer.

To make an appointment with a dermatologist near you, we invite you to visit the index at the back of this publication or [intermountainmedicalgroup.org](http://intermountainmedicalgroup.org).

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