

How to Choose a Surgeon

Our facility performs more than 1,500 Mohs surgeries per year, with the majority of these skin cancers located on the patient's face. Dr. Rausch has been practicing Mohs surgery since 2002 and has performed more than 15,000 Mohs cases in her career.

There are many things to consider when choosing a surgeon to treat your newly diagnosed skin cancer. Check below for some FAQs to help you understand the Skin Surgery Center of Virginia and Dr. Rausch's capabilities. Feel free to contact us directly at 804-282-4940 with any questions or for more information.

How many skin cancers does Dr. Rausch treat annually?

At the Skin Surgery Center of Virginia, our only focus is the diagnosis and removal of skin cancers using Mohs surgery and the necessary reconstruction of those defects created after the skin cancer has been removed. We are a tertiary referral center accepting patient referrals from plastic surgeons, dermatologists, ENT surgeons, and primary care physicians. Annually, our facility performs more than 1,000 Mohs surgeries, with the majority of these skin cancers located on the face.

What is the difference between a plastic surgeon and a Mohs surgeon?

Mohs surgery is unique in that the surgeon also reads the pathology (looking at skin under the microscope). Plastic surgeons can not perform Mohs surgery because they are not trained in pathology. Mohs surgeons are trained in dermatology residencies first. Dermatologists are required to have significant training in pathology of the skin. After residency, a Mohs surgery fellowship is further pursued which builds on the training obtained in dermatology residencies.

However, there are many types of surgeons trained in advanced facial reconstruction including Mohs surgeons, ENT surgeons, ophthalmologists, oral maxillofacial surgeons, and plastic surgeons. The surgical techniques and reconstructive options utilized after cancer removal in all these fields are the same, including fine suturing techniques used to make the scar lines as imperceptible as possible. Scars are strategically placed so they hide well in wrinkles or cosmetic junctions. Attention to avoid any distortion of important anatomical structures such as the eyes, eyebrows, lips and nose position is placed. Dr. Rausch has extensive experience in reconstruction as this is her only focus.

The most important consideration in choosing a surgeon is that they have a great deal of experience in facial reconstruction and that you are comfortable and confident in their abilities.

How does the cost of Mohs surgery compare to traditional excision?

Mohs surgery is performed under local anesthesia as opposed to general anesthesia. This alone significantly reduces health risks and healthcare costs to patients. Performing surgery in an outpatient facility also greatly reduces costs compared to surgery performed in a hospital, yet quality is not compromised. The Skin Surgery Center of Virginia is accredited by the Joint Commission, meeting the same high standards required by all hospitals at a reduced cost.

In addition, costs and inconveniences like multiple treatments to the same area can be avoided with Mohs surgery. The wound is not closed until all the tumor is removed, which prevents repeated treatments and closures due to positive margins after excision. This expedites care and minimizes cost.

Finally, there is a significant cost when tumors recur. Not only do they tend to be large involved cases with a high morbidity to the patient, they are costly. Although cancers can recur with Mohs surgery, the rate is much less than with other techniques which saves money as well.

What does it mean to be an accredited surgery center and is it necessary?

As an ambulatory surgical center, in order to be accredited, we are required to report to an outside organization that has oversight and regulates our standard of care. Our surgical center is fully accredited by The Joint Commission. The Joint Commission is considered the highest quality standard in the industry for insuring optimum patient care and safety. We take pride in these distinctions as very few dermatologic surgery centers nationwide achieve them.

Having a center that is accredited guarantees that quality measures are in place. Some measures include a protocol for proper sterilization of instruments, tracking infection rate, having equipment present that can be life saving in case of an emergency, confirming certifications of the staff and tracking biopsies and lab tests to make sure nothing slips through the cracks. These are just a few examples of many quality control measures in place to ensure a safe surgical environment.

What qualifications does the staff have?

A surgeon can only be as good as the people around him or her. To consistently meet and exceed high standards set forth by the Joint Commission (jointcommission.org), we believe that, not only the physician's participation but all members of our team contribute to the quality of care received by our patients.

The Skin Surgery Center of Virginia's clinical staff includes medical assistants, nurses, and physician assistants. Registered Nurses (RN's) compliment our team of highly trained individuals. Our staff is carefully selected through a rigorous application process. Employees participate in a formal orientation program upon hire, as well as mandatory annual training. All training is supervised by the physician, with additional learning opportunities provided throughout the year. We take pride in the qualifications, empathy and care provided by our staff.

Is your surgeon involved in academics or teaching?

Dr. Rausch is committed to increasing her knowledge base in order to provide the most up-to date information and treatment to her patients. Teaching and continued learning is a crucial aspect to our facility. Dr. Rausch is an active member of the Richmond Dermatologic Society, a forum of local dermatologists, who meets monthly with the purpose of presenting and discussing unusual dermatology cases. She is an assistant clinical professor at VCU and assists in training dermatology residents and Mohs surgery fellows. Dermatology residencies attract the most competitive and highest caliber of medical student applicants. They continually challenge, question and improve our center. Dr. Rausch has also been an invited speaker for physicians groups, employee wellness programs, public schools and community based programs.

Is my doctor board certified in his or her area of specialty?

Dr. Rausch is board certified in Dermatology. In addition to being board certified, she is a Fellow in the American College of Mohs Surgery (FACMS). The American College of Mohs Surgery (mohscollege.org) is the only organization that requires its members to have successfully completed an extensive one- to two-year ACMS-approved fellowship training program in Mohs after they have completed their years of residency training.

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