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Surgical Excision

What Is Surgical Excision?

A **surgical excision** is a common in-office procedure where a dermatologist removes a skin lesion (such as a skin cancer, atypical mole, cyst, or other growth) **along with a small margin of normal-appearing skin** when needed. The area is then typically closed with **stitches (sutures)**.

Excision is used to:

- **Treat skin cancers** (such as BCC, SCC, and some melanomas)
- Remove **atypical/dysplastic moles**
- Remove certain **benign growths** (cysts, lipomas, irritated lesions)
- Obtain a complete specimen for diagnosis and to confirm clear margins (when indicated)



What to Expect During Excision

Most excisions are performed in the office with local anesthesia:

1. **Marking & measuring** the lesion
 2. **Numbing injection** (brief sting/burn)
 3. **Removal of the lesion** (you should not feel pain, only pressure)
 4. **Bleeding control**
 5. **Stitches placed** to close the wound
 6. **Bandage applied** + aftercare instructions
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Pre-Op Instructions (Before Surgical Excision)

1) Tell us before your procedure if you:

- Take **blood thinners** (aspirin, warfarin, clopidogrel, apixaban, rivaroxaban, etc.)
- Have a bleeding disorder or bruise easily
- Have allergies to **lidocaine**, antiseptics, or adhesives
- Have a history of **keloids** or poor wound healing
- Have had prior infections after procedures

⚠ Do not stop prescribed blood thinners unless your prescribing clinician instructs you.

2) One week before

- Stop drinking **alcohol** (due to blood thinning effect of alcohol)
- stop fish oil supplement
- Stop smoking
- avoid optional aspirin and NSAIDS: **Ibuprofen** (Advil®, Motrin®), **Naproxen** (Aleve®), **Aspirin** (Bayer®), etc...

3) The day of your excision

- **Eat normally** (no fasting unless instructed)
- Take your regular meds unless told otherwise
- Wear **comfortable clothing** that allows easy access to the area
- Avoid lotion/makeup directly over the site
- If the excision is on the face/scalp: arrive with a **clean face/scalp** (no heavy makeup/hair products)

Post-Op Instructions (After Surgical Excision)

(Your clinician may tailor this to your specific location and closure type.)

First 24 hours

- Keep the bandage on and **keep the area dry** (unless told otherwise)
- Mild soreness is common; use pain relief as recommended by your clinician

After 24 hours: daily wound care

1. Wash hands
2. Gently clean with mild soap and water
3. Pat dry
4. Apply a thin layer of ointment **if instructed**
5. Cover with a clean bandage

Continue daily until fully healed or until stitch removal (if applicable).

Activity restrictions

- Avoid strenuous exercise, heavy lifting, stretching, or friction on the site as instructed
- Avoid **swimming/hot tubs/baths** (soaking) until cleared—especially with stitches

Bleeding—what to do

- Apply **firm, steady pressure** with clean gauze for **15 minutes** without checking
- If still bleeding, repeat another **15 minutes**
- If bleeding continues after 30 minutes of pressure, contact the office

Call the office if you notice

- Increasing redness, warmth, swelling, pus, fever
- Worsening pain after the first day
- Red streaking from the site
- The wound opens or stitches come loose

Scar care (after the wound has closed)

- Protect the area from sun (sun can darken scars)
 - Your clinician may recommend silicone gel/sheets or other scar-care options
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When Will I Get Results?

If the excised tissue is sent to the lab, results are often available within **several business days** (timing can vary). We will contact you with:

- The diagnosis
 - Whether margins are clear (if relevant)
 - Next steps and follow-up
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Where Surgical Excision Fits in Our Services

Category: 📍 Mohs & Dermatologic Surgery / Skin Cancer & Precancerous Conditions

Excision is one of the most effective ways to remove certain lesions completely and confirm a diagnosis.

Call to Action

Clear answers and complete removal start with the right procedure.

📍 [Request a Surgical Consultation](#)

Surgical Excision – Frequently Asked Questions

Does surgical excision hurt?

Local anesthesia is used. You may feel a brief sting from the numbing injection, but the procedure itself should not be painful. Some soreness afterward is normal.

How long does the procedure take?

Many excisions take **20–45 minutes**, depending on location, size, and complexity of closure.

Will I need stitches?

Often yes. Most excisions are closed with stitches. Some areas may use dissolving stitches, while others require removal in the office.

Will I have a scar?

Any excision can leave a scar. Dermatologic closures are designed to optimize healing and appearance. Proper wound care and sun protection help scars fade over time.

When are stitches removed?

Timing depends on location:

- Face: often sooner
 - Body/arms/legs: often later
- Your office will provide exact timing based on the site.

Can I exercise after an excision?

Light activity is usually okay, but strenuous exercise and heavy lifting may be restricted—especially if the excision is near a joint or on the back/shoulders/legs where tension can pull on stitches.

What if the pathology report shows skin cancer?

If the excision was performed to treat a known skin cancer, we'll confirm whether the margins are clear. If margins are not clear or if the tumor is higher risk, additional treatment (including Mohs surgery) may be recommended.

What if I'm on blood thinners?

Many patients can safely have excisions while taking blood thinners, but you must inform your dermatologist. **Do not stop prescribed blood thinners** without guidance from the prescribing clinician.

How do I know if my wound is infected?

Call us if you develop increasing redness, warmth, swelling, pus, fever, or worsening pain after the first day.