

# INFORMED CONSENT – SKIN CANCER SURGERY

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

This is an informed-consent document that has been prepared to help your plastic surgeon inform you about skin cancer surgery(s), its risks, as well as alternative treatment(s).

It is important that you read this information carefully and completely. Please initial each page, indicating that you have read the page and sign the consent for surgery as proposed by your plastic surgeon and agreed upon by you.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The surgical removal of skin cancer is a procedure frequently performed by plastic surgeons. Because skin cancer will not disappear spontaneously, surgical removal is a treatment option. There are many different techniques for removing skin cancers. Various surgical procedures may be involved in reconstruction after the skin cancer is removed.

## **ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS**

Alternative forms of management include not treating the skin cancer condition, the use of medications applied to the skin cancer, and destruction by non-surgical techniques. There are risks and potential complications associated with alternative methods of skin cancer treatment.

## **RISKS OF SKIN CANCER SURGERY-**

Every surgical procedure involves a certain amount of risk and it is important that you understand these risks and the possible complications associated with them. In addition, every procedure has limitations. An individual's choice to undergo a surgical procedure is based on the comparison of the risk to potential benefit. Although the majority of patients do not experience these complications, you should discuss each of them with your plastic surgeon to make sure you understand all possible consequences of skin cancer surgery.

**Bleeding-** It is possible, though unusual, to experience a bleeding episode during or after surgery. Intraoperative blood transfusions may be required. Should post-operative bleeding occur, it may require an emergency treatment to drain the accumulated blood or blood transfusion. Do not take any aspirin or anti-inflammatory medications for ten days before or after surgery, as this may increase the risk of bleeding. Non-prescription "herbs" and dietary supplements can increase the risk of surgical bleeding. Hematoma can occur at any time following injury. If blood transfusions are necessary to treat blood loss, there is the risk of blood-related infections such as hepatitis and HIV (AIDS). Heparin medications that are used to prevent blood clots in veins can produce bleeding and decreased blood platelets.

**Infection-** Infection is unusual after surgery. Should an infection occur, additional treatment including antibiotics, hospitalization, or additional surgery may be necessary.

**Scarring-** All surgery leaves scars, some more visible than others. Although good wound healing after a surgical procedure is expected, abnormal scars may occur within the skin and deeper tissues. Scars may be unattractive and of different color than the surrounding skin tone. Scar appearance may also vary within the same scar. There is the possibility of visible marks from sutures used to close the wound after the removal of skin cancer. There is the possibility that scars may limit motion and function. In some cases scars may require surgical revision or treatment.

**Damage to Deeper Structures-** There is the potential for injury to deeper structures including nerves, blood vessels, muscles, and lungs (pneumothorax) during any surgical procedure. The potential for this to occur varies according to where on the body surgery is being performed. Injury to deeper structures may be temporary or permanent.

**Systemic Spread of Skin Cancer-** Certain varieties of skin cancer can spread to other areas of the body. Depending on the cell type and degree of invasion of the skin cancer, additional surgery or cancer treatment may be necessary. In some situations that involve melanoma-type skin cancer, patients may be advised to consider a sentinel lymph node biopsy staging procedure at the time of the excision of the skin cancer lesion.

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**Recurrence of Skin Cancer-** Skin cancers in rare situations can recur after surgical excision. Additional treatment or secondary surgery may be necessary.

**Skin Discoloration / Swelling-** Some bruising and swelling normally occurs following surgery. The skin in or near the surgical site can appear either lighter or darker than surrounding skin. Although uncommon, swelling and skin discoloration may persist for long periods of time and, in rare situations, may be permanent.

**Skin Sensitivity-** Itching, tenderness, or exaggerated responses to hot or cold temperatures may occur after surgery. Usually this resolves during healing, but in rare situations it may be chronic.

**Pain-** You will experience pain after your surgery. Pain of varying intensity and duration may occur and persist after surgery. Chronic pain may occur very infrequently from nerves becoming trapped in scar tissue.

**Sutures-** Some surgical techniques use deep sutures. You may notice these sutures after your surgery. Sutures may spontaneously poke through the skin, become visible or produce irritation that requires removal.

**Delayed Healing-** Wound disruption or delayed wound healing is possible. Some areas of the skin may not heal normally and may take a long time to heal. It is even possible to have loss of skin or flap tissue used for reconstruction of the skin cancer excision. Some areas of skin may die, requiring frequent dressing changes or further surgery to remove the non-healed tissue. **Smokers have a greater risk of skin loss and wound healing complications.**

**Skin Contour Irregularities-** Contour irregularities and depressions may occur after skin cancer surgery. Visible and palpable wrinkling of skin can occur. Residual skin irregularities at the ends of the incisions or “dog ears” are always a possibility and may require additional surgery. This may improve with time, or it can be surgically corrected.

**Allergic Reactions-** In rare cases, local allergies to tape, suture materials and glues, blood products, topical preparations or injected agents have been reported. Serious systemic reactions including shock (anaphylaxis) may occur to drugs used during surgery and prescription medications. Allergic reactions may require additional treatment.

**Surgical Anesthesia-** Both local and general anesthesia involve risk. There is the possibility of complications, injury, and even death from all forms of surgical anesthesia or sedation.

**Frozen-Section Inaccuracy-** Frozen-section techniques used to determine tissue pathology and completeness of tumor removal may be inaccurate. It is possible that subsequent tissue analysis may identify that there may be incomplete removal of the skin cancer or the presence of a different tissue pathology. Additional surgery may be necessary if it is determined that the removal of the skin cancer is incomplete.

**Change in Skin Sensation-** It is common to experience diminished (or loss) of skin sensation in areas that have had surgery. Diminished (or complete loss of skin sensation) may not totally resolve.

**Unsatisfactory Result-** Although good results are expected, there is no guarantee or warranty expressed or implied, on the results that may be obtained. There is the possibility of a poor result from the removal of skin cancer. This would include risks such as unacceptable visible deformities, loss of function, poor healing, wound disruption, skin death and loss of sensation. Even if the skin cancer is removed successfully, you may be disappointed with the results of reconstructive surgery. It may be necessary to perform additional surgery to attempt to improve your results.

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### **ADDITIONAL ADVISORIES**

**Female Patient Information-** It is important to inform your plastic surgeon if you use birth control pills, estrogen replacement, or if you believe you may be pregnant. Many medications including antibiotics may neutralize the preventive effect of birth control pills, allowing for conception and pregnancy.

**Smoking, Second-Hand Smoke Exposure, Nicotine Products (Patch, Gum, Nasal Spray)-**

Patients who are currently smoking, use tobacco products, or nicotine products (patch, gum, or nasal spray) are at a greater risk for significant surgical complications of skin dying, delayed healing, and additional scarring. Individuals exposed to second-hand smoke are also at potential risk for similar complications attributable to nicotine exposure. Additionally, smoking may have a significant negative effect on anesthesia and recovery from anesthesia, with coughing and possibly increased bleeding. Individuals who are not exposed to tobacco smoke or nicotine-containing products have a significantly lower risk of this type of complication. Please indicate your current status regarding these items below:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a non-smoker and do not use nicotine products. I understand the risk of second-hand smoke exposure causing surgical complications.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a smoker or use tobacco / nicotine products. I understand the risk of surgical complications due to smoking or use of nicotine products.

It is important to refrain from smoking at least 6 weeks before surgery and until your physician states it is safe to return, if desired.

**Mental Health Disorders and Surgery-** It is important that all patients seeking to undergo surgery have realistic expectations that focus on improvement rather than perfection. Complications or less than satisfactory results are sometimes unavoidable, may require additional surgery and often are stressful. Please openly discuss with your surgeon, prior to surgery, any history that you may have of significant emotional depression or mental health disorders. Although many individuals may benefit psychologically from the results of surgery, effects on mental health cannot be accurately predicted.

**Medications-** There are many adverse reactions that occur as the result of taking over-the-counter, herbal, and/or prescription medications. Be sure to check with your physician about any drug interactions that may exist with medications which you are already taking. If you have an adverse reaction, stop the drugs immediately and call your plastic surgeon for further instructions. If the reaction is severe, go immediately to the nearest emergency room. When taking the prescribed pain medications after surgery, realize that they can affect your thought process and coordination. Do not drive, do not operate complex equipment, do not make any important decisions, and do not drink any alcohol while taking these medications. Be sure to take your prescribed medication only as directed.

### **ADDITIONAL SURGERY NECESSARY**

Should complications occur, additional surgery or other treatments may be necessary. Even though risks and complications occur infrequently, the risks cited are the ones that are particularly associated with skin cancer removal. Other complications and risks can occur but are even more uncommon. The practice of medicine and surgery is not an exact science. Although good results are expected, there is no guarantee or warranty expressed or implied, on the results that may be obtained.

### **PATIENT COMPLIANCE**

Follow all physician instructions carefully; this is essential for the success of your outcome. It is important that the surgical incisions are not subjected to excessive force, swelling, abrasion, or motion during the time of healing. Protective dressings and drains should not be removed unless instructed by your plastic surgeon. Successful post-operative function depends on both surgery and subsequent care. Physical activity that increases your pulse or heart rate may cause bruising, swelling, fluid accumulation and the need for return to surgery. It is wise to refrain from intimate physical activities after surgery until your physician states it is safe. It is important that you participate in follow-up care, return for aftercare, and promote your recovery after surgery.

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### **HEALTH INSURANCE**

Most health insurance companies exclude coverage for cosmetic surgical operations or any complications that might occur from surgery. Please carefully review your health insurance subscriber information pamphlet. **Most insurance plans exclude coverage for secondary or revisionary surgery.**

### **FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

The cost of surgery involves several charges for the services provided. The total includes fees charged by your surgeon, the cost of surgical supplies, anesthesia, laboratory tests, and possible outpatient hospital charges, depending on where the surgery is performed. Depending on whether the cost of surgery is covered by an insurance plan, you will be responsible for necessary co-payments, deductibles, and charges not covered. The fees charged for this procedure do not include any potential future costs for additional procedures that you elect to have or require in order to revise, optimize, or complete your outcome. Additional costs may occur should complications develop from the surgery. Secondary surgery or hospital day-surgery charges involved with revision surgery will also be your responsibility. **In signing the consent for this surgery/procedure, you acknowledge that you have been informed about its risk and consequences and accept responsibility for the clinical decisions that were made along with the financial costs of all future treatments.**

### **DISCLAIMER**

Informed-consent documents are used to communicate information about the proposed surgical treatment of a disease or condition along with disclosure of risks and alternative forms of treatment(s), including no surgery. The informed-consent process attempts to define principles of risk disclosure that should generally meet the needs of most patients in most circumstances.

However, informed-consent documents should not be considered all inclusive in defining other methods of care and risks encountered. Your plastic surgeon may provide you with additional or different information which is based on all the facts in your particular case and the current state of medical knowledge.

Informed-consent documents are not intended to define or serve as the standard of medical care. Standards of medical care are determined on the basis of all of the facts involved in an individual case and are subject to change as scientific knowledge and technology advance and as practice patterns evolve.

**It is important that you read the above information carefully and have all of your questions answered before signing the consent on the next page.**

## INFORMED CONSENT – SKIN CANCER SURGERY

### CONSENT FOR SURGERY / PROCEDURE or TREATMENT

1. I hereby authorize Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ and such assistants as may be selected to perform the following procedure or treatment:

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I have received the following information sheet:

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2. I recognize that during the course of the operation and medical treatment or anesthesia, unforeseen conditions may necessitate different procedures than those above. I therefore authorize the above physician and assistants or designees to perform such other procedures that are in the exercise of his or her professional judgment necessary and desirable. The authority granted under this paragraph shall include all conditions that require treatment and are not known to my physician at the time the procedure is begun.
3. I consent to the administration of such anesthetics considered necessary or advisable. I understand that all forms of anesthesia involve risk and the possibility of complications, injury, and sometimes death.
4. I acknowledge that no guarantee or representation has been given by anyone as to the results that may be obtained.
5. I consent to be photographed or televised before, during, and after the operation(s) or procedure(s) to be performed, including appropriate portions of my body, for medical, scientific or educational purposes, provided my identity is not revealed by the pictures.
6. For purposes of advancing medical education, I consent to the admittance of observers to the operating room.
7. I consent to the disposal of any tissue, medical devices or body parts which may be removed.
8. I consent to the utilization of blood products should they be deemed necessary by my surgeon and/or his/her appointees, and I am aware that there are potential significant risks to my health with their utilization.
9. I authorize the release of my Social Security number to appropriate agencies for legal reporting and medical-device registration, if applicable.
10. I understand that the surgeons' fees are separate from the anesthesia and hospital charges, and the fees are agreeable to me. If a secondary procedure is necessary, further expenditure will be required.
11. I realize that not having the operation is an option.
12. IT HAS BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME IN A WAY THAT I UNDERSTAND:
- THE ABOVE TREATMENT OR PROCEDURE TO BE UNDERTAKEN
  - THERE MAY BE ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR METHODS OF TREATMENT
  - THERE ARE RISKS TO THE PROCEDURE OR TREATMENT PROPOSED

I CONSENT TO THE TREATMENT OR PROCEDURE AND THE ABOVE LISTED ITEMS (1-12). I AM SATISFIED WITH THE EXPLANATION.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient or Person Authorized to Sign for Patient

**INFORMED CONSENT – SKIN CANCER SURGERY**

Date _____	Witness _____
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