

## How to Choose a Surgeon

The Skin Surgery Center of Virginia, a surgical subdivision of Elevate Dermatology, is a high-volume specialty center with a strong focus on the diagnosis and surgical treatment of skin cancer, particularly in cosmetically and functionally sensitive areas such as the face.

Our center performs more than 1,500 Mohs surgeries annually, the majority involving the head and neck. Dr. Christine Rausch has been practicing Mohs surgery since 2002 and has performed nearly 30,000 Mohs cases over her career. The Skin Surgery Center of Virginia functions as a tertiary referral center, receiving complex and high-risk cases from dermatologists, plastic surgeons, ENT surgeons, ophthalmologists, and primary care physicians.

### How many skin cancers does Dr. Rausch treat annually?

Dr. Rausch's clinical practice is focused on skin cancer surgery and reconstruction following cancer removal. Each year, she performs over 1,500 Mohs procedures, reflecting extensive experience in managing both routine and complex tumors, particularly on the face. High procedural volume is associated with greater efficiency, refined surgical judgment, and excellent outcomes.

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

Mohs surgery is unique in that the surgeon also examines the tissue microscopically during the procedure, allowing for complete margin assessment before reconstruction. Plastic surgeons are not trained in dermatopathology and therefore do not perform Mohs surgery.

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 of these fields are the same, including ne 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 is placed 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. Mohs surgeons typically have extensive experience in facial reconstruction because this is what they do all day, every day. The most important consideration in choosing a surgeon is that they have a great deal of experience in facial reconstruction after cancer removal and that you are comfortable and confident in their abilities.

### Mohs surgeons complete:

- A dermatology residency with extensive training in skin pathology
- A dedicated one- to two-year fellowship in Mohs micrographic surgery and reconstruction

While many specialists are trained in facial reconstruction, Mohs surgeons routinely remove skin cancers and reconstruct defects in the same setting, with particular attention to tissue preservation, function, and cosmetic outcome.

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

Mohs surgery is performed under local anesthesia in an outpatient surgical center, which significantly reduces both medical risk and cost compared to hospital-based procedures requiring general anesthesia.

### Additional advantages include:

- Complete margin control before wound closure
- Reduced need for repeat surgeries
- Lower recurrence rates compared with standard excision

Avoiding recurrence not only benefits patients medically but also reduces long-term healthcare costs.

### **What does it mean to be an accredited surgery center?**

The Skin Surgery Center of Virginia is fully accredited by The Joint Commission, reflecting adherence to the highest standards of patient safety and quality of care. Accreditation requires ongoing compliance with rigorous protocols, including:

- Instrument sterilization and infection surveillance
- Emergency preparedness and life-saving equipment
- Staff credentialing and training
- Biopsy and laboratory tracking systems

Very few dermatologic surgery centers nationwide meet these standards.

### **What qualifications does the staff have?**

Our clinical team includes highly trained medical assistants and registered nurses who specialize in dermatologic surgery. Team members are carefully selected and participate in:

- Formal orientation and physician-supervised training
- Mandatory annual competency assessments
- Ongoing education to maintain excellence in patient care

We believe outstanding surgical outcomes depend on a skilled, consistent, and experienced team.

### **Is Dr. Rausch involved in teaching and academics?**

Dr. Rausch is committed to ongoing education and academic involvement. She is an assistant clinical professor at VCU, participates in dermatology resident education, and is an active member of the Richmond Dermatologic Society, where complex cases are discussed regularly. She also lectures for physician groups and community organizations.

### **Is Dr. Rausch board certified?**

Dr. Rausch is board certified in Dermatology and is a Fellow of the American College of Mohs Surgery (FACMS). Fellowship designation reflects completion of accredited subspecialty training and a commitment to excellence in Mohs surgery and reconstruction.

### **How many layers will my surgery require?**

One nationally benchmarked quality metric in Mohs surgery is the mean number of stages (layers) required to completely remove the tumor while preserving as much healthy tissue as possible. As you can see, Dr. Rausch is able to clear skin cancer with less layers than the national average. These metrics reflect high-quality, high-value care.

### **Current benchmarking data:**

#### **Head & Neck Mohs**

##### **National Mohs Surgeon Average**

1.6 layers

##### **Dr. Rausch's Average**

1.4 layers

#### **Trunk & Extremities Mohs**

##### **National Mohs Surgeon Average**

1.3 layers

##### **Dr. Rausch's Average**

1.2 layers

***Please feel free to contact us at 804-282-4940 with any questions or for additional information.***