

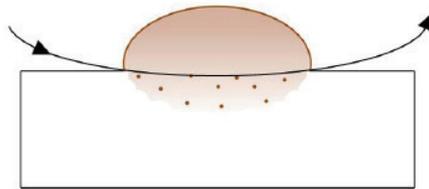
MOLE REMOVAL

There are a number of reasons why a mole might be removed. Sometimes a patient simply doesn't like the way it looks for cosmetic reasons. Other times, it's simply bothersome and gets in the way of shaving, brushing the hair, etc. Of course, sometimes we'll recommend that a mole be removed because it has a suspicious appearance and it would be safer to have the lab evaluate it to rule out any abnormalities such as skin cancer.

What's important for patients to understand is that there are different ways to "remove" a mole. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages.

Superficial Shave Removal

In this procedure, only the "raised" portion of the mole is removed:



Because all moles have some degree of "under-the-skin" component, some of the mole will be left in the skin after it has healed:

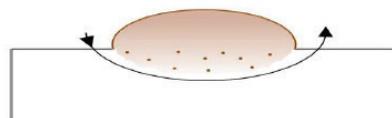


The **advantage** of this procedure is that it typically provides the best cosmetic result. You'll see in the explanations of the other two removal methods that, if we make it our goal to remove absolutely every last bit of the mole, a more noticeable scar will be made. With this procedure, the end result is that the area where you once had a mole would now be flat. If the mole had some color in it, then it's likely that there will be some color left behind - but at least it will be flat and "freckle-like" rather than raised and "mole-like". However, if the mole was flesh-colored in the first place, then it would likely heal both flat and roughly the same color as the surrounding skin (an ideal cosmetic result).

The **disadvantage** of this procedure is that, because some of the mole is left behind in the skin, it's possible that the residual portion could grow in the coming years, giving the impression that the mole is "growing back". Also, if the lab were to evaluate the removed part of the mole and determine that there are abnormal (or even cancerous) cells within it, then complete removal (such as that described in either procedure below) would still need to be performed.

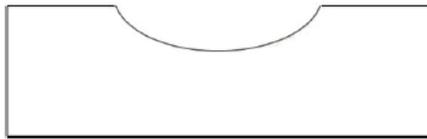
Deep Shave Removal

This procedure is somewhat similar to the shave removal described above, except as the name implies, this removal goes deeper:



MOLE REMOVAL

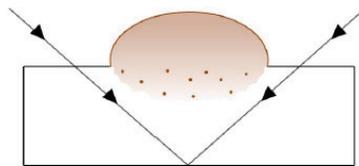
And because the removal goes deeper, it leaves a “depressed” wound that will probably never fill in:



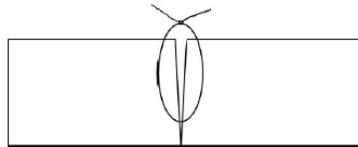
The **advantage** to this procedure is that if a mole appears to be harmful, you would want to have as much of the mole removed as possible. Performing a “deep” shave removal also makes it very unlikely that the mole would ever “grow back”. The **disadvantage** of this procedure is that it results in a much more noticeable scar. The scars from this type of removal are often depressed, like a “divot”, and may also be hypo-pigmented (lighter in color than the surrounding skin).

Excision

The third kind of mole removal is called “excision”. This involves cutting “around” the mole, through the entire thickness of skin:



Because the entire thickness of skin is removed, an “open” wound is created which must be closed with stitches:



The advantage of excision is that it provides the highest degree of certainty that the mole has been completely removed in its entirety. This is particularly important when it comes to moles which are showing “pre-cancerous” or even “melanoma” changes within.

There are a few disadvantages to excision. First, it’s a surgical procedure that typically can’t be performed without planning and preparation. In other words, such a procedure normally needs to be scheduled ahead of time on a “surgery day”. Second, because it goes deeper, more “risks” are involved, such as infection, bleeding, or even nerve damage. Third, excision creates what most think of as a traditional “surgical” scar. In other words, it will heal in a line-like scar, and you will also see marks where the sutures were placed.



(Typical Excision Scar Appearance)

Because of these issues, excision is typically reserved for moles that need to be removed for safety reasons.