

# Cosmetic Mole and Skin Tag Removal

Mr Andrew Diver is a Consultant Plastic Surgeon at Cosmetech and offers skin tag and mole removal and other non-surgical treatments including PDO Thread-lifts, Dermal Fillers and Anti-wrinkle Injections. He also offers Cosmetic Surgery at Kingsbridge Private Hospital.



**M**oles are extremely common in the general population and are found in every age-group including new born babies. Most appear in childhood and up to the age of 25. It is normal for an adult to have between 10 and 40 moles. The skin contains pigment cells called melanocytes which make the pigment melanin. When these cells grow in clusters it forms a mole or 'pigmented naevus'. They are benign but rarely a mole can change into a type of skin cancer called a melanoma. Warning signs would be an increase in size, darkening of the colour, bleeding or ulceration and a significant change in shape. Any suspicious lesions should be seen by your doctor and referred to a specialist if necessary.

Skin tags are also very common. They are flesh coloured and usually have a narrow stalk to normal skin. They are often seen in the neck, chest, back, armpits, groin, under the breasts and on the eyelids. These are benign but can be irritating by rubbing on clothes or by being cosmetically unacceptable to the patient.

**Q: How are skin tags and moles removed?**

Skin tags are a bit easier and can be removed by cutting, freezing (cryotherapy) or burning off (electrotherapy). This should be done in a controlled sterile setting to minimise the risk of infection, and they do bleed so the clinic needs to be able to manage this. Moles are usually excised with a scalpel. Occasionally they are shaved off but to ensure completion of the removal, especially if there are any suspicious features, the whole depth of the skin needs to be removed in one piece. Moles should be sent to the lab for pathology to ensure there are no suspicious cells. At Cosmetech we send all moles for pathology.

**Q: Does it hurt having these removed?**

If there is going to be significant discomfort the doctor or surgeon should usually administer local anaesthetic to numb the area. There will be mild discomfort as the anaesthetic is being injected but it is usually not significant and the anaesthetic takes effect within a couple of minutes. For very small skin tags, they can sometimes be frozen off without anaesthetic. Cosmetech has local anaesthetic cream which can be applied in clinic in advance of the procedure. We don't like causing pain and make every effort to minimise it.



**Q: How long does the procedure take?**

Most of these procedures are very quick. A mole can be removed and the skin sutured within 5 to 10 minutes. Administration of anaesthetic and skin preparation add some time, and if several lesions are being removed obviously it will take a bit longer. A skin tag can be removed in a matter of seconds but again, it is key that this is done in a controlled sterile setting (don't try this at home).

**Q: Can I drive home afterwards?**

Usually there is no issue with driving unless for example the lesion was near the eye and vision was temporarily affected by swelling or watering. Hand surgery can also affect driving but the vast majority of these lesions are small enough not to cause a problem. If in doubt bring a friend or relative or take a taxi.

**Q: What about aftercare?**

There is usually a dressing for the first 3 to 7 days and, depending upon the operation site, sutures may need to be removed. On the face these are often removed

between 5 to 7 days, but are left a bit longer on other body areas. Again these should be removed by someone skilled and experienced as doing it incorrectly can leave bits of stitch in the skin, or risk reopening the wound. After about a week most wounds do not need dressed but should be kept clean, and paraffin ointment often helps at this time. Depending on your surgeon, the wound may be dressed with ointment alone or sometimes skin glue.

**Q: Will I have a scar?**

All surgery which cuts through the full depth of skin will leave a scar. Skin tag excision shouldn't leave much noticeable scarring but mole excision usually will. The quality of the scar can vary depending on genetics. To optimise the scar we perform precise stitching, remove stitches at the appropriate time, and encourage scar management in the form of moisturising and massage. Scars can take up to 2 years to mature to their final appearance. If a scar does become thicker or remain red for a long time there are treatments such as steroid injections or laser colour reduction, but these are thankfully rarely necessary.

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