

Cryotherapy Patient Information

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James Paget University Hospitals NHS
Foundation Trust
Review Date: November 2019
DM 9 version 1

What is Cryotherapy?

Cryotherapy means 'treatment using low temperature' and refers to the removal of skin lesions by freezing them. Liquid nitrogen is commonly used for this purpose.

Which skin conditions is Cryotherapy used for?

Cryotherapy is used to treat certain cancerous, pre-cancerous skin lesions and non-cancerous lesions such as viral warts. This treatment was recommended for you after consultation with your healthcare professional following both assessment of your skin and having considered other treatment options.

What does Cryotherapy involve?

Cryotherapy is carried out during an out-patient consultation by the dermatologist or dermatology nurse without any special preparation.

Cryotherapy is usually given in the form of a spray, but sometimes a cotton bud can also be used.

The duration of the freezing is dependent on the area and the lesion being treated but is often a matter of seconds.

Care of the area(s) after Cryotherapy?

You can wash the area as normal but pat the area dry.

A scab will form and will eventually drop off.

A dressing or plaster is not necessary, but may be advisable if the area is oozing or is prone to being irritated or rubbed by clothing.

What are the side effects of Cryotherapy?

Immediate side effects:

Pain: Discomfort can occur both at the time of treatment and for some time afterwards. Pain relief taken for the first 24 hours after Cryotherapy may relieve that discomfort; also taking pain relief **before** can reduce the discomfort.

Swelling and redness: This is normal and usually settles after two or three days.

Cryotherapy close to the eyes may induce prominent puffiness of the lower eyelids which settles within a day.

A steroid is applied to the area of your body after Cryotherapy to help reduce inflammation, except in the case of viral warts. For a short while the treated area may ooze a little.

Blistering: This is also a common consequence of Cryotherapy and blisters settle after a few days as the scab forms. Some people blister more easily than others and this does not necessarily mean that the skin has been frozen too much. Occasionally the blisters may become filled with blood.

Infection: Infection can occur, resulting in increased pain and the formation of pus. This may require topical antiseptic or antibiotic therapy.

Longer term side effects:

Scarring: Rarely, a scar may form.

Pigmentation changes: The skin at or around the Cryotherapy site may lighten or darken in colour, especially in dark-skinned people. This usually improves with time, but may be permanent.

Numbness: If a superficial nerve is frozen, it may result in numbness of the area of skin supplied by that nerve. Normal feeling usually returns within a matter of months.

Please note Cryotherapy may not be fully effective in some patients.

If you have any further questions please telephone the dermatology department on any of the numbers below:

01493 453545 or 01493 453602 or 01493 453601 during the hours of 08:30 and 17:15 Monday to Friday.

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

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- A welcoming and positive attitude
- Polite, friendly and interested in people
- Value and respect people as individuals
So people feel **welcome**

Attentively kind and helpful

- Look out for dignity, privacy & humanity
- Attentive, responsive & take time to help
- Visible presence of staff to provide care
So people feel **cared for**

Responsive communication

- Listen to people & answer their questions
- Keep people clearly informed
- Involve people
So people feel **in control**
- Effective and professional
- Safe, knowledgeable and reassuring
- Effective care / services from joined up teams
- Organised and timely, looking to improve
So people feel **safe**



The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240