

Cryotherapy

This leaflet is for patients having cryotherapy treatment for a skin condition and explains what it entails and what to expect afterwards.

What is cryotherapy?

Cryotherapy treatment is a carefully controlled cold burn. This is usually used to treat areas of sun damaged skin and warty lesions on the skin. Sometimes certain types of slowly growing thin skin cancers (e.g. Basal cell carcinoma) are also treated with cryotherapy. No local anaesthetic is required for this procedure as freezing itself has some local anaesthetic effect.

What are the after effects?

The actual procedure may cause vague soreness or mild pain – this depends on the length of the freeze and the area being treated.

After treatment you will notice slight redness together with some swelling – the degree of swelling will depend on the site of treatment and how long the treatment takes. These changes usually only last for a few days.

In some people, particularly where the skin is rather thin and sensitive, a water (or blood) blister may form and fluid may discharge. If a blister does form, simply let the fluid out with a sterile pointed instrument. Repeat this until the blister no longer refills.

If you are prescribed a cream to use, apply it twice daily on any clean dry dressing. Unless instructed differently, small areas can be covered with a sticking plaster dressing. If you are not given a prescription, use an antiseptic cream available from a chemist twice daily to avoid the small chance of infection occurring.

Once the fluid discharge or blistering stage is over – usually a few days unless the condition of your skin requires prolonged freezing – a crust or scale may form. Simply leave this and it will lift off the skin naturally over 10-14 days.

If you experience any discomfort or pain after the procedure, then you can take simple pain relief tablets (such as paracetamol) for a few days until the pain settles.

Please feel free to discuss any questions or worries you may have with your doctor.

Contact us

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Further information

The British Association of Dermatologists www.bad.org.uk

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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