



What to Expect Following Cryosurgery (Liquid Nitrogen)

What is Cryosurgery?

Cryosurgery is a technique for removing skin lesions that primarily involve the surface of the skin, such as *warts*, *seborrheic keratosis*, or *actinic keratosis*. It is a quick method of removing the lesion with minimal scarring.

The liquid nitrogen needs to be applied long enough to freeze the affected skin. By freezing the skin, a blister is created underneath the lesion. Ideally, as the new skin forms underneath the blister, the abnormal skin on the roof of the blister peels off. Occasionally, if the lesion is very thick (such as a large wart), only the surface is blistered off. The base or residual lesion may need to be frozen at another visit.

It takes about one to three weeks for the scab to fall off, which is when the new layer of skin has formed under the blister. Areas of thinner skin, such as the face, may heal a little faster.

What to Expect Over the Next Few Weeks

- **During Treatment** - Area being treated will sting, burn, and then possibly itch.
- **Immediately After Treatment** - Area will be red, sore, and swollen.
- **Next Day** - Blister or blood blister has formed, tenderness starts to subside. Apply a Band-Aid if necessary.
- **7 Days** - Surface is dark red/brown and scab-like. Apply Vaseline® or an antibacterial ointment, such as Polysporin®, if necessary.
- **2 to 4 Weeks** - The surface starts to peel off. This may be encouraged gently during bathing, when the scab is softened.
- No makeup should be applied until area is fully healed.

How to Take Care of the Skin after Cryosurgery

- A Band-Aid can be used for larger blisters or blisters in areas that are more likely to be traumatized - such as fingers and toes. If the area becomes dry or crusted, an ointment (Vaseline®, Bacitracin®, or Polysporin®) can also be applied.
- Cleanse area with a mild cleanser such as CeraVe® foaming cleanser, Cetaphil® cleanser, or Dove® soap and cool water.
- Pat the area dry with a lint-free cloth and apply an ointment (Vaseline®, Bacitracin®, or Polysporin®).
- Avoid glycolic acids, Vitamin C, scrubs, Tretinoin (Retin-A), and Retinol creams for 7 to 10 days.
- If approved by your Provider, you may bathe, swim, exercise, and otherwise follow all of your normal activities.

Please see reverse side of page.

How to Take Care of the Skin after Cryosurgery – Continued

- The area may get wet while bathing, but swimming or hot tub use should be avoided for one week following a treatment or while the skin is open.
- Within 24 hours, you can expect the area to be swollen and/or blistered. The blister may not be visible to the naked eye.
- Within one week, the swelling goes down. The top becomes dark red and scab-like. The scab will loosen over the next weeks, and should fall off within one month.

Adverse Effects

- In general, anesthesia is unnecessary. Although, for very small children, we will sometimes suggest applying a topical anesthetic cream at home before the office visit.
- The most common adverse effects are pain, swelling/blistering, potential for infection, and pale discoloration of the skin after it heals.

Blisters

- Anytime a blister surfaces, whether from ill-fitting shoes, an oven burn, or liquid nitrogen cryosurgery, it will be a bit painful. For most patients, the pain is a temporary sting with some discomfort periodically over the next day as the blister forms.
- The goal is to achieve a blister. This means, most commonly, patients will have a blister form following treatment. Sometimes, the blister is so thin that it can't be seen and may have minimal swelling. Occasionally, a blood blister forms that can be quite dramatic but is harmless.
- Rarely, the blister may become infected. When this happens, the blister becomes unusually tender, the fluid becomes cloudy, and the redness around it becomes more extensive (and may even form streaks). **If this happens, contact our office.**
- Some lesions, especially those on the face, may leave a slight pale discoloration.
- True scarring, involving deeper layers of the skin is unlikely.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our office at 520.795.7729.