OTTAWA SKIN CANCER

Skin Cancer & Reconstructive Surgery

Cryotherapy: Care Instructions

What is cryotherapy?

Your doctor has chosen to perform cryotherapy for lesions on your skin. Cryotherapy uses liquid nitrogen spray to rapidly freeze small areas of skin. The freezing damages abnormal skin cells and increases the body's immune response in the frozen area. Cryotherapy can be used to treat benign (non-cancerous) lesions such as warts and skin tags, as well as some skin cancers. For larger lesions, multiple treatments are sometimes needed.

What to expect:

- **Redness & Swelling**: It is normal for the treated areas to become red, swollen, and/or blistered over the first 72 hours after treatment. This is a sign that the body has started to heal the underlying skin. The wounds may weep a small amount of fluid; this is OK and is not a sign of infection.
- **Crusting**: The treated sites will next scab over as the healing process continues. The crusts will gradually fall off and heal fully over a period of several days to weeks.
- **Healing**: Healing should be complete after several weeks, with healthy new skin replacing the original lesion.
- **Skin Changes**: Sometimes the new skin that forms at the treated site is lighter or darker than the surrounding skin. This tends to happen more often in darker-skinned individuals. If this occurs, it is usually permanent.
- **Hair Loss**: If the lesion is in a hair-bearing area of skin (eyebrow, scalp, etc.), there is a small risk of hair loss in the area. If this occurs, it is usually permanent.

Care instructions:

- **Washing**: You may wash as normal. Be gentle: do not scrub the treated sites, and gently pat dry.
- **Ointment**: Apply ***Vaseline*** (NOT POLYSPORIN) to the treated sites 1-2 times per day, especially once they begin to crust over. ***We do not recommend Polysporin*** as studies have shown that it leads to worse healing.
- **Bandage**: No bandages are required. It is best to leave the treated sites open to air to promote healing.

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