

Dermatology Consultants at Newton-Wellesley, PC

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CRYOTHERAPY WOUND CARE INSTRUCTIONS

General information: Cryotherapy uses liquid nitrogen to freeze the top portion of the skin, destroying superficial skin lesions such as keratoses and warts. Deeper or multiple freezing treatments can be used for skin cancers.

What to expect: Treated areas generally turn red the first day, then form a scab over the next few days, then heal over 2-3 weeks. The treatment causes pain for a few seconds to minutes, and treated areas may ache for a few hours afterwards. Headaches are common after treating scalp lesions because of muscle tension.

Wound care: The treated area will heal more quickly and will be less itchy if an ointment such as Vaseline petroleum jelly (or Aquaphor, both are available over the counter) is used to keep it moist and greasy. Antibiotic ointments such as Bacitracin or Neosporin are not necessary and may sometimes cause an allergic reaction. Band-aids may be needed to protect the scab from rubbing, but are often not necessary. It is a myth that the scab will heal best if you “let the air get at it” to form a dry scab.

Blistering: In some patients and in some areas, a blister or blood blister forms after treatment. This is treated by leaving the blister intact as long as possible, and applying Vaseline and a bandaid if the blister breaks.

Bleeding: Bleeding can occur, especially if the scab is traumatized. If you notice active bleeding, remove the dressing and applying steady pressure with a washcloth or gauze for 15-20 minutes. If the oozing does not stop after this maneuver, repeat for another 15-20 minutes. If still bleeding, please call the office, 617-969-0210. If the office is closed, the answering service will contact the covering physician.

Discomfort: You may have a small amount of tenderness or discomfort. Tylenol is the preferred painkiller after cryotherapy because will not increase the risk of bleeding.

Infection: Signs of infection include increasing pain, redness, swelling, tenderness and pus. This usually develops approximately a week after the procedure. If you think you may have an infection, please call the office, 617-969-0210.

Color change: Treated areas can heal with either lighter or darker discoloration. This generally resolves slowly over months but is occasionally a permanent change.