

SOUTHMEAD SURGERY

CRYOTHERAPY CLINIC

What conditions can be treated with cryotherapy?

A wide variety of superficial benign lesions can be treated with cryotherapy, but it is most commonly used to remove **actinic keratoses** (an area of sun-damaged skin found predominantly on sun-exposed parts of the body), viral warts, **seborrhoeic keratoses** and other benign lesions.

What does the procedure involve?

The procedure itself lasts a matter of seconds; the precise time depending on the thickness and size of the lesion. The frozen skin becomes white and takes one to two minutes to thaw to normal skin temperature. The process is repeated once the skin has thawed out.

Over the succeeding few days, a scab will form, and this will take one to two weeks (and occasionally a little longer, especially on the legs) to come away.

Depending on the nature of the lesion, more than one treatment may be necessary, and this is usually repeated at regular intervals.

How should the treated area be cared for?

It is usually suggested that the treated areas are kept dry for 24 hours.

It is important not to pick at the scab, as this will encourage scarring. A dressing or plaster is not usually necessary, but may be advisable if the treated area is prone to being traumatized or rubbed by clothing.

What are the side effects of this treatment?

Immediate side effects:

- *Pain* - cryotherapy is usually well-tolerated, but can sometimes be painful if a deep freeze has been necessary. This discomfort can occur both at the time of treatment and for a variable time thereafter.
- *Swelling and redness* - this is a normal immediate response to freezing the skin, and usually settles after two to three days. For a short while the treated area may ooze a little. Cryotherapy close to the eyes may induce prominent **puffiness** of the lower eyelids which settles within days.
- *Blistering* - Some **people** blister more easily than others and the development of blisters does not necessarily mean that the **skin** has been frozen too much. Occasionally the blisters may become filled with blood; this is harmless and only if a blister was very uncomfortable would it be necessary to puncture it, using a sterile needle. Any **punctured** blister should be covered with a dressing to avoid infection.
- *Infection* - uncommonly, infection can occur, resulting in increased pain and the formation of pus: this may require topical antiseptic or antibiotic therapy.

Subsequent side effects:

- *Scarring* - rarely, a scar will form, especially if a deep freeze has been necessary.
- *Pigmentation changes* - the skin at and around the treatment 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.
- Treatment may not be effective, or the condition may recur.

**I have read and understand the information on Cryotherapy and the possible side effects of treatment.
I understand I will be asked to sign consent at each treatment.**

Please print name..... Date.....

Date of birth.....

Signature.....

If signing on behalf of a child, please state your relationship.....