

Cryotherapy

(Liquid Nitrogen)

The **a** **b** **c**'s of Health



Changi
General Hospital
SingHealth



Cryotherapy (Liquid Nitrogen)

What is cryotherapy?

Cryotherapy is a procedure for removing skin lesions by freezing them. Liquid nitrogen is used for this procedure because of its low boiling point at -196 degrees celsius.

What skin conditions can be treated with cryotherapy?

A wide range of benign (non-cancerous) skin lesions can be treated with cryotherapy. Examples include viral warts, actinic keratoses and seborrhoeic keratoses. Some superficial low-grade skin cancers can also be treated with this method, but your dermatologist will discuss the benefits and risks of using cryotherapy with you before starting treatment.

How is the procedure performed?

Your dermatologist or his trained nurse assistant will perform this procedure. We may need to use a surgical blade to remove the thick dead skin on viral warts before applying the liquid nitrogen. Liquid nitrogen is applied to the skin using a spray gun, a metal probe or a cotton applicator. The duration of application depends on the size, depth and type of lesion treated. The frozen skin is then allowed to thaw, and the process is repeated 1 to 2 times more.

The skin lesion may form a scab, and this will take 1 to 2 weeks to drop off. Depending on the type, size and depth of the skin lesion, more than one treatment may be necessary.

You may get a painful burning sensation after the treatment. However, this only lasts for a few minutes or rarely hours.

If you develop persistent pain at the treatment site, please highlight to the nurses. You can take painkillers e.g panadol to reduce the pain.

Sometimes, there may be blister formation.

What are the side effects of liquid nitrogen cryotherapy?

- Pain/ discomfort (common)
- Swelling and redness (common)
- Blistering
- Lightening or darkening of skin color at the treatment site. This is seen more commonly in individuals with darker skin colour.
- Numbness
- Recurrence of the skin lesion
- Infection (rare)
- Scarring (rare)

How do I take care of the treatment area?

- Keep the area dry
- Do not pick on the scab that forms over the treated area
- The treated areas will initially become red and slightly swollen and occasionally a blister may develop. It is not normally possible to predict when it will blister, but if it does develop, it can be burst with a sterile or clean needle to release the fluid.
- Over the next few days, the treated area will scab and may darken in colour. Do not pick, scratch or attempt to peel off the scab. For best results allow the scab to come off itself, rather than picking at it.
- Healing normally takes about a week. When the scab comes off, there may be some changes in pigmentation of the skin (lightening or darkening) which may be permanent – especially in dark skinned persons.



For appointments and enquiries,
please call the CGH Appointment Centre at
Tel: (65) 6850 3333

CGH Appointment Centre operating hours:

8.30 am to 8.00 pm (Monday to Friday)
8.30 am to 12.30 pm (Saturday & Sunday)
Closed on Public Holidays

For more information, please visit
<http://www.cgh.com.sg>



Changi
General Hospital

SingHealth

2 Simei Street 3 Singapore 529889
Tel: 6788 8833 Fax: 6788 0933 www.cgh.com.sg
Reg No 198904226R

All information is valid at the time of printing (April 2009)
and subject to revision without prior notice.



Organisation Accredited by
Joint Commission International

