

SMITH DERMATOLOGY

SKIN CANCER • SKIN SURGERY • SKIN DISEASES

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER CRYOSURGERY (LIQUID NITROGEN) TREATMENT

Liquid Nitrogen is a very cold gas. In this liquid state it has a temperature of 320 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Dermatologists use liquid nitrogen to treat certain skin growths such as warts, seborrheic and actinic keratoses, and a whole variety of other skin tumors. These skin growths are destroyed by the freezing action of this agent. With cryosurgery we have the advantage of being able to treat many skin growths and leave very little scarring.

From a few hours to a few days after treatment, the area may blister, turn black, or form a scab. This is a desirable result. In some, no reaction is apparent.

1. You are allowed to get the area wet even immediately after treatment.
2. If the area is painful within the first few hours after treatment, soaking the area in warm water and taking aspirin will give pain relief. Most persons have little or no pain from this treatment. You may have some swelling around the eyes.
3. It is not necessary to cover the area with a bandage. In fact, this is undesirable. Things heal better if left open to the air. You should protect the area from injury as much as possible.
4. Painful large blisters (even blisters filled with blood) can occur at times. These can be opened and the fluid drained out to relieve the pain. This may be done with either a needle or the tip of a sharp pair of scissors which has been cleaned with alcohol.
5. As the treated area heals the unwanted skin growth will fall off. This will take several days to weeks depending on the size and nature of the growth treated, the location on the skin, and the way your body heals.
6. Allow the growth to fall off by itself - Don't pull or pick it off.
7. When the growth does come off, the skin underneath will be somewhat red. As time passes, it will assume the color of normal skin. Don't bandage, pick or apply any medications to the site after the growth has fallen off. The area may be sensitive to touch and be itchy as it heals. This is normal and it may take some time before it is exactly like the skin around it once more.