



Cryotherapy

You have had cryotherapy, the freezing of skin lesions with liquid nitrogen. Liquid nitrogen is very cold and has a boiling point of -196°C .

What to expect

The effects of cryotherapy are similar to a small burn.

The treated area will become sore, swollen and red for a day or two. If it feels very uncomfortable, you may take regular doses of paracetamol (follow the instructions on the packet as to the amount). The area can be left uncovered. You can apply a light dressing if it is very weepy over the first few days.

Puffiness around the eyes is very common if the eyelids or forehead have been treated with cryotherapy. This should not cause alarm and will settle.

Occasionally a blister forms. Blisters can be left alone, even if they look blood-filled. If a blister becomes tense, you may prick it with a needle that has been sterilised in the steam of a kettle. This will release the fluid. Leave the skin forming the top of the blister in place.

A scab usually forms in the first 2 or 3 days and will take 1–2 weeks to separate (up to a month on the lower legs). It is a good idea to apply Vaseline to the scab twice a day until the scab has naturally separated. Do not pick the scab. Once the scab separates, the skin may appear pale pink. The colour will fade over time.

In the long term, it is very common to get a degree of skin lightening in the area that has been treated. Scarring of the treated area is also possible. Numbness can occur following treatment but usually recovers within 3–4 months.

Dermatology

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