Department of Dermatology
Churchill Hospital

Cryotherapy
Information for patients
What is cryotherapy?

Cryotherapy is a treatment which uses a chemical called liquid nitrogen to destroy a number of skin lesions, including viral warts, seborrhoeic warts and solar keratoses. Liquid nitrogen is extremely cold and freezes and destroys the lesion.

How is it carried out?

The liquid nitrogen is sprayed onto the lesion until the lesion and a small rim around it turns white. For most lesions a 5 - 10 second freeze will be enough. Sometimes the treatment may need to be repeated or carried out for longer.

Looking after the treated area

Treatment is likely to produce a reaction similar to a burn, with redness, leaking fluid or crusting lasting a few days. You do not need to cover the treated area with a dressing and you do not need to keep it dry. Simply treat it gently, as it may be slightly sore. If you do feel that you need to take a painkiller you can take paracetamol or other pain relieving tablets.

After the treatment a blister (sometimes a ‘blood blister’) may develop. If this happens, don’t worry. Protect the blister with a clean, dry dressing. If a large blister forms, please seek advice from your GP or Practice Nurse. A simple antiseptic cream such as Savlon™ may be used if the blister bursts. The blisters will form scabs that will fall off after about 2 - 3 weeks.

Sometimes swelling may develop in the surrounding skin, particularly if you have an area around your eyes treated. If this
happens, you may want to take an anti-inflammatory painkiller such as ibuprofen. The doctor may sometimes prescribe a steroid ointment, to be applied to the treatment site to reduce swelling.

The healing process may take up to 6 weeks, but some areas that are treated may take longer.

### Risks and side effects

Cryotherapy is a safe and reliable treatment and the appearance of the skin afterwards is usually very good. However, once the area has healed you may be left with a pale mark or a flat white scar. Sometimes lesions redevelop after treatment with cryotherapy. If this happens, please speak to your GP, as they may be able to recommend further cryotherapy or alternative treatments.

### When to contact us

If you have severe pain or swelling that does not respond to simple painkillers or anti-inflammatory painkillers, or you are concerned about infection, please call the Dermatology Department:

Tel: **01865 228 212 or 228 241 or 228 225**
(9.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Friday)

At all other times please contact the On-call Dermatologist through the Churchill Hospital switchboard:

Tel: **01865 741 841**
If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221 473 or email PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk

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