

Cryotherapy (the use of extreme cold) is useful in treating many medical conditions. It has been used in brain and eye surgery and in the treatment of skin lesions for many years. Liquid nitrogen is simply nitrogen from our atmosphere cooled to about 300 degrees F below zero. It is the most commonly used agent in cryotherapy because it is chemically inert. Its low temperature produces a superficial "frostbite" reaction. Some pain normally occurs for a few minutes but most of this dissipates shortly. Aspirin-type medications may be used if necessary.

During the first day after freezing, the treated area sometimes blisters. Any dark coloration in this blister is normal and just means there is some blood in the fluid. It is better to leave the blister alone and protected but if it is extremely large or painful, it may be pricked painlessly using a needle sterilized by a flame. If it does break, sponge the area twice daily with 3% hydrogen peroxide for a few days until the crust is dry. The darkened crust will separate when healing is complete, generally in about two to three weeks.

Do not pick at the site or wear constant coverings, since this may encourage infection. A temporary bandage may be applied for expected trauma, such as a sporting event, however. You may bathe or swim for less than 15 minutes at a time and continue with most normal activities.

Special instructions:

Clinician:

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