



**SKIN CARE WEST**

MEDICAL + SURGICAL DERMATOLOGY

## Care of the Skin after Cryosurgery

Cryosurgery (targeted tissue freezing) is a common treatment for skin conditions such as actinic keratoses, seborrheic keratoses and warts. It can also be used to treat select types of thin skin cancer. At SCW it is applied using liquid nitrogen delivered from pressurized canisters at a temperature of  $-196^{\circ}$  Celsius.

There may be mild to moderate discomfort at the start of treatment, but it decreases within a few seconds once the skin surface is frozen. Minor discomfort afterwards is common and is usually relieved with pain medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil).

Treated areas will initially become red and swollen, and then dark red/brown or scab-like. Often a blister will form, which may contain dark fluid. Over a period of several weeks new skin will form at the base of the wound, and the layers that were frozen will gradually peel off. Healing time can vary from a few days to multiple weeks depending on the depth of freezing that was applied, as well as location and size of the treated area.

Wash treated areas on a daily basis with a mild cleanser (CeraVe foaming cleanser, Cetaphil cleanser, or Dove soap) to gently remove any loose scab or crust. Blisters can be pricked with a sterile needle if you find them intolerable, otherwise they are best left to settle on their own. **Keep the treated area moist by applying a clean greasy ointment (Vaseline, Aquaphor or Polysporin).** Cover with an adhesive bandage as needed to keep the ointment in place and to protect the wound. Most treatment sites do well without a dressing as long as ointment is applied several times throughout the day. You may bathe, swim, exercise and otherwise follow all of your normal activities.

Infections after cryosurgery are very uncommon, but they do occur. If a treated area becomes increasingly red and painful or discharges pus, please contact us (or another health provider if we are unavailable). True scarring is uncommon after cryosurgery but treated areas may be slightly paler than surrounding skin after they heal.