



SKIN | CANCER | FOCUS

What is Cryotherapy

Cryotherapy is a treatment that uses extreme cold to destroy abnormal or diseased skin cells. It is commonly used for various skin lesions such as warts, solar keratoses (sun spots), and certain early skin cancers. The cold is usually delivered using liquid nitrogen.

How Does Cryotherapy Work?

- Liquid nitrogen freezes the targeted skin cells.
- Freezing causes the cells to die, and over time, the treated area heals with new, healthy skin.
- The treatment may cause blistering, redness, or crusting as part of the healing process.

What Skin Conditions Can Be Treated?

Cryotherapy is often used for:

- Solar keratoses (actinic keratoses)
- Certain superficial basal cell carcinomas
- Warts
- Some benign skin lesions (e.g., skin tags, small growths)
- Occasionally, small precancerous lesions

What to Expect During the Procedure

- A very cold substance (liquid nitrogen) is applied directly to the lesion.
- Treatment usually takes a few seconds to a few minutes, depending on the lesion size.
- You may feel a stinging or burning sensation during treatment.

After the Treatment

- The treated area may be red, swollen, or blistered for a few days.
- A scab may form, which usually heals in 1–3 weeks.
- Avoid picking at the treated area.
- The area may appear lighter or darker than surrounding skin initially, but this usually improves over time.
- Follow-up visits may be required to check healing or repeat treatment.

Possible Side Effects

Most side effects are temporary, but may include:

- Redness, swelling, or blistering
- Discomfort or mild pain

- Temporary (occasionally permanent) change in skin colour (lighter or darker)
- Scarring (rare)
- Infection (rare)

Precautions

- Avoid sun exposure on the treated area. Use sunscreen once healed.
- Notify your doctor if you have diabetes, poor circulation, or immune system problems.
- Inform your doctor if the treated area shows signs of infection (increasing redness, pus, pain).

Benefits of Cryotherapy

- Quick and minimally invasive
- Can be done in a clinic setting
- Effective for many precancerous and superficial skin lesions
- Usually does not require anesthesia

When to Seek Help

Contact your doctor if:

- The area becomes very painful or swollen
- There is pus or unusual discharge
- The lesion does not heal or keeps growing
- You notice new or changing skin lesions

Summary

Cryotherapy is a safe and effective method for treating many superficial skin lesions and early skin cancers. Proper aftercare and follow-up are important for the best outcome.