Advice for patients who require treatment with liquid nitrogen

Are there any side effects from the treatment?

Slight discomfort may occur following treatment. Blisters may develop within a few hours, followed by scab formation. Loss or increase of pigment (skin colour) in areas treated may occur and may take several months to recover or may not fully recover. Occasionally infection of blistered areas may occur. Scarring may also occur sometimes.

If you have any worries following your treatment please telephone the Dermatology Department on 0191 5195850 between the hours of 08:30am -16:30pm Monday to Friday.

Alternatively you can contact your own GP Practice or telephone the 111 service for advice.

We are committed to raising the standard of written information for patients, their carers, people who use the NHS and the general public. This information can be made available in another format or language on request. For further copies of this leaflet please contact on telephone numbers above.
What is liquid nitrogen treatment?
Liquid nitrogen is used to treat warts, verrucas, skin tags, small fleshy growths and similar ‘lumps and bumps’ on the skin. Application is usually by a spray and lasts about 10-15 seconds. It can be uncomfortable and some people may find it painful. Liquid nitrogen is extremely cold.

What can I expect from my treatment?
You will see a nurse who has been trained to apply liquid nitrogen.

Liquid nitrogen treatment may need to be repeated for up to six treatments. When applied to the skin, liquid nitrogen may cause a blister to form, similar to a burn. After treatment the affected area will gradually discolour and fall off. This may take up to 10 days. The surrounding skin may sometimes become red and swollen, and may be sore for a day or so. If you do experience any pain, this should be relieved by taking your usual simple pain relieving medicines such as paracetamol.

What happens after my treatment?
There is no need to cover the treated areas if the blisters remain intact. If the blister bursts a dry dressing may be applied. New skin quickly forms and any scab or blister will soon disappear. The cosmetic result is usually good.

Following treatment it is advisable to keep the area dry for 24 hours. Hands may be washed and a brief shower taken but you should not soak the affected area. Liquid nitrogen treatment often needs to be repeated every three weeks for up to six treatments.

What happens when I am having viral wart treatment?
Warts on the hands and feet require additional treatment at home between appointments. You will be advised what treatment to use by your nurse. This may involve:

- Soaking the affected area in warm water (or bath) for 10 minutes
- Rubbing down hard skin on the surface of the wart with an emery board which should be discarded after use
- Applying petroleum jelly to protect the good skin surrounding the wart
- Applying wart paint, which can be purchased from pharmacies, to the wart and allowing this to dry
- Repeating the above steps each evening on each wart

These measures will increase the success rate of the treatment.

In order to reduce your risk:

- Do not scratch or pick the wart as this may spread infection
- Do not touch other people’s warts.
- Do not share towels, flannels or other personal items with a person who has warts
- Do not share shoes or socks with someone who has a verruca
- Wear flip flops in communal showers and in swimming pool changing areas