

Having cryotherapy in your mouth (oral cryotherapy)

Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery

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Information for Patients

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What is cryotherapy?

Cryotherapy involves the freezing of non-cancerous (benign) lesions on the top surface of the skin and soft tissues causing them to shrink or disappear. Cryotherapy usually uses liquid nitrogen.

What does the procedure involve?

Once the area is identified as suitable for cryotherapy, you will be booked in to have the procedure done as an outpatient appointment.

The procedure does not need local anaesthetic, but this can be used if you find the procedure uncomfortable. A metal probe is used to apply the liquid nitrogen to the affected area, lasting 30 to 60 seconds. This may be repeated 2 to 3 times in 1 session.

The area will look white at first, taking 2 or 3 minutes to thaw to normal skin temperature.

What should I expect after treatment?

- After the procedure, you may have some soreness in the area. You can take normal painkillers for this.
- The area may appear red and swollen for a few days, possibly forming an ulcer.
- A scab will form over the next few days, and will fall off in around 1 or 2 weeks (do not pick the scab as this can cause the area to scar more). The area will look normal eventually, even though some scarring or discoloration is possible long term.
- Your surgeon may advise using Vaseline over the wound whilst it is healing.
- If the wound is on the skin, keep it dry for the first few days, but if it becomes wet then

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gently pat it dry with a clean soft flannel.

- There is a small chance of infection which will mean more swelling and discomfort. An antiseptic or antibiotic cream may be needed if this does happen.
- If a nearby nerve is also frozen, you may have longer lasting numbness for a few weeks or months.
- Depending on the size and depth of the lesion, more than 1 treatment appointment may be needed. You will have a follow up appointment to check healing, then your surgeon will discuss with you if more treatment is needed.
- After treatment, eat a soft diet for the first few days to avoid grazing the wound.
- Most people are ok to go back to work the next day. If you are visibly swollen you may need to take a couple of days off work.

Treatment may not resolve the issue, or it can come back. In some cases, the lesion may still need to be removed with surgery.

Review

A review appointment will be arranged for 6 to 8 weeks after treatment. At this appointment, the surgeon will assess how well the lesion has responded to treatment, and if it needs another session of treatment. If it does need more treatment, this may be done on that day, if possible.

Other treatment choices

If the lesion is not causing any problems, and the surgeon feels it is unlikely to cause any issues, you may decide to leave the lesion and have regular check ups with your Dentist or GP. In some cases, the surgeon may decide the lesion is better to be removed with surgery. If this is more appropriate, they will discuss that treatment plan with you.

Contact details : 0116 258 5671 / 5301 or the Emergency Department outside office hours.

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