

Maxillofacial Department

Cryotherapy

What is cryotherapy?

The term cryotherapy means “treatment using low temperature” and refers to the removal of lesions by freezing them. The most common agents currently used by doctors are carbon dioxide and liquid nitrogen.

What conditions can be treated with cryotherapy?

A wide variety of superficial, benign lesions can be treated with cryotherapy. In the mouth it is usually used to treat vascular malformations (collections of blood vessels) or mucus cysts. Cryotherapy can cause these to shrink away or disappear.

What does the procedure involve?

Cryotherapy is applied using a metal probe. The tissue is usually frozen two to three times, each application lasting from 30 seconds to one minute. Sometimes local anaesthetic is used.

Some patients may require this procedure to be repeated at a future appointment.

Is there any alternative to this treatment?

If the lesion is not thought to be dangerous or causing problems, it can sometimes be left alone. Sometimes the lesion can be removed surgically. Your surgeon will discuss this if they feel it is appropriate.

How will I feel after treatment?

In the first few days after treatment, the area will become swollen. This can be quite noticeable. The swelling can last three to five days.



Patient Information

Sometimes a blister may form which may burst naturally or can be burst with a sterile pin. A scab may form and this will take one to two weeks (and occasionally a little longer) to come away.

Cryotherapy can be painful and it may be necessary to take some painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen for a few days.

If the mouth has been treated, it is best to stick to a soft diet, such as soups and mashed potatoes, for a few days. Take care not to knock the area with your toothbrush.

Risks/Side effects

- Pigment changes can happen in the skin around the site. It may darken or lighten in colour. This usually improves with time, but may be permanent.
- Numbness of the area is possible but this usually goes in time.
- Scarring rarely occurs if deep freeze has been necessary.

Will I be off work and for how long?

Most people will be able to go back to work straight away. However as you may be visibly swollen in the mouth or face area, you may want to take a couple of days off, especially if work involves lots of talking or presentations.

Review appointment

Normally you will be given a review appointment so that the surgeon can check how successful cryotherapy has been. Sometimes a further session may be necessary or occasionally the affected area may need to be removed surgically.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6500 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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