
Cryosurgery (Liquid nitrogen treatment)

At Morgan Dermatology we use liquid nitrogen to treat a variety of skin conditions. This involves the freezing of superficial skin growths such as actinic keratoses, seborrheic keratosis, lentiginos, warts and other skin growths. This liquefied gas is negative 196 degrees Celcius (minus 321 degrees Fahrenheit). It essentially causes frostbite to the skin treated, thus destroying the targeted tissues and allowing new normal skin to take its place.

What should I expect?

One can expect some degree of discomfort with cryosurgery. This typically involves a transient stinging or burning sensation that resolves momentarily. In some cases, especially on the fingers, a throbbing sensation may last a few hours. Swelling and blistering may occur during the first 24 hours following treatment. A scab will form, which will fall off by itself in 1 to 3 weeks. New healthy skin will take its place.

Are there any adverse effects?

The most common adverse effects are discoloration, swelling and blistering. The discoloration may be darker but is usually in the form of lighter colored areas of skin that persist following the treatment. This is more commonly seen with darker skin tones.

Does the treated area require any special care?

No, typically the care of an area treated with liquid nitrogen involves just leaving it be. If a blister develops it is recommended that it be left alone. The blister roof serves as a natural wound dressing. If the blister pops or if crusting develops, then a thin film of Vaseline ointment may be applied 2 times a day until this resolves.

Note

Often, more than one treatment is required to adequately remove a skin growth, especially when treating larger warts. If you have any concerns about the treated area or questions about cryosurgery, please call the office.