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Skin Care after Liquid Nitrogen Therapy

You have just been treated with liquid nitrogen, one of the coldest substances on earth. We use this to treat benign and pre-malignant skin lesions like warts, seborrheic keratoses, and actinic keratoses in the outer surface of the skin. Applied by a sprayer or cotton swab, liquid nitrogen creates an ice ball that causes peeling of the outer layer of skin at a specific depth.

What to Expect

Liquid nitrogen definitely stings and hurts for a few minutes to a few hours. The treated area and surrounding skin can look red and swollen. A blister will sometimes form in the first few days. This can also be very tender, but is a normal and expected effect of treatment. If a blister doesn't form, the skin usually becomes scaly and darker in color over a week to ten days and begins to peel off. The underlying new skin will often have a red or pink appearance. The skin may look darker or lighter in color for a short time, but nearly always returns to a normal color. Rarely, a white or red scar may form.

Care

There is usually very minimal care for an area treated with liquid nitrogen and the area may be washed normally. Make-up can be worn over the area on the face; clothing, shoes and socks can be worn over the areas on the trunk or extremities. Pain can be treated with Tylenol or Advil or Aleve. Ice applied directly on the lesion for fifteen minutes at a time can relieve pain and discomfort. Occasionally a tender or blood blister may be drained in a sterile fashion at home or in the office to relieve pain. If a blister ruptures or is drained, begin wound care with twice a day hydrogen peroxide washes and application of polysporin or bacitracin ointment.

When to Call the Office

Please notify the office if you have any concern about infection or if severe pain occurs. Treated areas on the foot, especially for warts can make walking difficult. Padding the area and resting may be helpful.