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## LIQUID NITROGEN TREATMENT FACT SHEET

Application of liquid nitrogen is often used to treat skin lesions such as warts, molluscum and keratoses. Although the exact mechanism of action is unclear, freezing damages the treated lesion preventing its survival. Treatment rarely requires anesthesia and almost never leaves a scar.

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### What to expect

- ▶ *Liquid nitrogen* is applied to the top of the skin lesion. Freezing occurs throughout the area which extends slightly to the surrounding tissue. Freezing can cause a stinging, burning pain that peaks about 2 minutes after the treatment is performed.
  - ▶ Within minutes after freezing, surrounding skin will become red and begin to swell. In most cases a blister will actually form within 3-6 hours. Often there is a small amount of bleeding into the blister which will turn it dark purple of black. This is expected and should not be cause for concern.
  - ▶ The blister usually flattens in 2-3 days and sloughs off in 2-4 weeks.
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### How to care for the treated area

- ▶ As the blister may be tender for the first few days, you may want to protect it with a band-aid. However, most often it may be left to the air.
  - ▶ In most cases the blister top is a good *natural* bandage which protects the new skin growing underneath. Attempts to remove the blister before the new skin is ready may produce scarring or infection.
  - ▶ Do not soak treated area (ie, wash dishes, swim, etc) during the first 24 hours.
  - ▶ You should gently cleanse the treated area daily with mild soap and water.
  - ▶ If the area is excessively uncomfortable, you may take an over-the-counter pain reliever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil®).
  - ▶ Protect the area from sun exposure while it is healing to help prevent scar formation.
  - ▶ If discomfort persists, report to your clinician.
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### Follow-up

- ▶ Please be aware that warts, actinic keratoses, and seborrheic keratoses often require several treatments. If your skin lesion is still present after healing (usually 2 weeks), schedule a follow-up appointment; otherwise, return as instructed by your clinician.
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For an appointment: [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu) or call **510-642-2000** Clinic Nurse **643-7197** for advice