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NHS Foundation Trust

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Cryotherapy

Issued by Obstetrics and Gynaecology



The purpose of this leaflet is to explain what cryotherapy treatment is.

What is Cryotherapy?

Cryotherapy is a simple procedure which involves freezing an area of tissue on the neck of the womb (cervix). It is most commonly used to treat a cervical ectropion.

Very rarely cryotherapy may be used to treat minor abnormalities of the cervix.

What is a cervical ectropion?

Cervical ectropion used to be called a cervical erosion and is a normal, harmless condition which is nothing to worry about. It occurs when the cells lining the birth canal come out onto the surface of the cervix. It is very common, particularly in younger women taking the oral contraceptive pill. It usually causes no symptoms and does not need to be treated. However, some women do experience symptoms such as bleeding in between periods, bleeding after sexual intercourse, or a profuse vaginal discharge.

Benefits of cryotherapy

Cryotherapy is an effective treatment option when signs and symptoms are a problem and an ectropion is visible.

Alternatives to cryotherapy

The alternative to having cryotherapy treatment is not to treat it. The symptoms may settle with time, even without treatment.

Risks

Cryotherapy is a relatively safe and effective treatment. However, it has the following risks

Vaginal Discharge

It is normal to experience a heavy watery discharge, which may be bloodstained, for up to four weeks. If you experience any heavy bleeding you should contact your GP.

Infection

Infection following cryotherapy is very rare. Any unusual pelvic pain, heavy bleeding, fever or offensive smelling discharge should be reported to your GP.

How is it done?

Cryotherapy is usually carried out in an out-patients setting. The treatment only takes about 10 minutes.

It is done by placing a small freeze-probe (cryoprobe) against the cervix which freezes the tissue. The cells destroyed by freezing are shed afterwards in a heavy watery discharge.

Cryotherapy cannot be carried out if you are having a period or you are pregnant.

Instructions following cryotherapy

- You must not have sexual intercourse for four weeks. This is to prevent infection
- Do not use tampons, creams or pessaries for four weeks. This is to prevent infection
- Continue your existing method of contraception

Please note:

- Your next period may be prolonged, heavy, irregular or missed entirely
- You may have a watery discharge which could last for several weeks
- You may have some cramp-like discomfort following treatment. A simple painkiller such as paracetamol can be taken

Useful contact numbers

Useful contacts:

Please contact the Nurse Colposcopist or the Colposcopy Secretary where you receive your treatment:

North Tyneside General Hospital (0191) 293 2501

Wansbeck and Hexham General Hospital (01670) 564 145

Berwick Infirmary

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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