



CRYOSHAPE PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

What is Cryoshape™?

Cryoshape™ is a way of treating scars that are problematic. It involves freezing the scars from the inside with liquid nitrogen gas. Usually, it is used for scars that are described as being hypertrophic or keloid. These are scars that are often itchy, red and raised. In the case of keloids, they do not improve and often grow continuously. Cryoshape™ is often reserved for scars that have only poorly responded to standard scar treatments such as pressure, topical silicone and massage.

How is it carried out?

Usually, the procedure is undertaken as a day case in clinic or theatre. Antiseptic solution is applied to the skin and then local anaesthetic injections are used to numb the area. Sometimes, for bigger areas, the procedure is carried out with the patient asleep under general anaesthetic. Once the area is completely pain-free, a small metal tube is inserted through the scar. Cold liquid nitrogen gas is then passed through the metal tube. The gas is harmless and escapes to the air after it has cooled the tube. As the tube cools, it freezes the scar. This can take from a few minutes up to an hour, depending on the size of the scar. At the end of the procedure, the frozen scar is allowed to thaw and the tube is removed. The area is covered with antibiotic ointment.

How does it work?

Freezing damages the cells within the scar from the inside. It causes the hard connective tissue of the scar – collagen protein – to shrink and remodel with time. The area gradually heals from the edges to the centre. For reasons still not understood, there is a much reduced tendency for the scar to recur after freezing.

What are the benefits?

Usually, the procedure only has to be carried out once. In at least half of all scars, Cryoshape™ reduces the volume of the scar. The amount of reduction in size is very variable and appears to be dependent upon the site with the shoulders and ears benefiting most. In at least 60% of patients there is an improvement in the troubling symptoms of pain, tenderness, itch and discomfort. There are no guarantees that there will be an improvement, but the majority of patients gain benefit from the procedure.

What are the risks of the procedure?

There is a small chance that the procedure might need to be repeated. In up to 10% of patients, there is little improvement in the scar. Mild discomfort, blistering, discharge, crusting and redness are normal, temporary side effects of the procedure which resolve with time. More rarely, there may be excessive bleeding at the site, alteration in skin pigment, alteration in sensation and depression or hollowing of the skin. Infection is rare.



Who cannot have the procedure?

Most people can undergo Cryoshape™. The exceptions are if there is any suspicion that the lesion is not a scar or any active infection at the site. Any cause of poor wound healing may prevent treatment and this includes certain blood conditions, immunosuppression, radiotherapy or chemotherapy. If you are pregnant, it is worth waiting until after the birth until any treatment is started. If you are allergic to any of the antiseptic or anaesthetic agents, this may prevent the treatment.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

It would be useful for you to relay the details of your practice nurse to the team prior to the procedure. This is because we often enlist the help of the nurse with dressings for the first week after the procedure. An hour before Cryoshape™, we recommend that you take a simple pain-relieving medications such as paracetamol.

What can I expect afterwards?

The scar may show some small areas of bleeding at the point where the metal tube went in. Usually, this stops quickly. The antibiotic ointment and a sterile dressing are applied. After a few hours, a blister develops under the dressing. The area may give some mild discomfort for a day. It will drain a small amount of watery fluid from the blisters for around one week. After this time, a dry crust appears on the area. There is then slow healing in from the edges of the scar. Depending on its size, this can take anything up to a couple of months, but for most people, healing occurs within a month. During this time, a small amount of discharge from the site is normal. Infection is very rare after Cryoshape™. If you feel unwell and there is any new redness, malodourous smell, pain or increased discharge from the site, please contact the team through the numbers that you will be given. Some patients often take a week off work and activities immediately after the procedure to allow for regular changes of dressings and showering.

What do I do afterwards?

Regular pain relief with simple analgesics like paracetamol is useful for the first few days. Twice a day, the treated area must be showered and washed with a mild soap. After washing, a thin layer of the antibiotic ointment is reapplied. Over this, a simple dressing such as a gauze pad is applied. We will give you dressings for the first few days but after that, it will be necessary to get further dressings from your practice nurse.

What dressings will I need?

The dressings are usually antiseptic ointment and an adhesive gauze pad. The pad is replaced whenever it gets soiled and this may mean frequent dressing changes in the first week.

What if I want any more information?

The team can be contacted at any time for more information. Please ring 0117 906 4872 or email info@scarteam.co.uk

