



Cryotherapy of the Cervix

*University of
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Information
for Patients*

Why cryotherapy?

The cervix is the lower end of the uterus. Pap tests and biopsies are used to check for abnormal cells on the cervix. Abnormal cell growth on the cervix is called dysplasia (dis-PLAY-szuh). Dysplasia is not cancer. If you do not get treatment for dysplasia, it could lead to cancer. If your Pap test or biopsy shows dysplasia, your doctor or nurse may recommend cryotherapy. In cryotherapy, the cervix is frozen to destroy abnormal cells.

What to expect

Cryotherapy is an outpatient procedure. It should be done when you are not menstruating. This way your cervix can be clearly seen. If there is any chance that you could be pregnant, your doctor or nurse will do a pregnancy test. You will be asked to sign a consent form before the procedure.

Your doctor or nurse will clean your cervix with iodine solution. Tell him or her if you are allergic to iodine or shellfish. An instrument attached to a “cryo” machine is put on the tissue that is going to be frozen. When the machine is turned on, gas is sent into it. The tip becomes cold enough to freeze the cells and destroy them. The freezing is applied for 3 minutes, followed by a 5-minute break. It is then reapplied for 3 more minutes.

After the procedure

During and after the procedure, you may feel cramps like menstrual cramps. These cramps usually go away about 1 hour after the procedure. You may take ibuprofen if needed. You can also use a heating pad.

As your cervix heals, you will have heavy, yellow, or clear vaginal discharge. The discharge contains dead cells that are shed from your cervix. New cells will grow and replace them. This may last for 3 weeks. During this time, you may want to wear a pad.

You cannot put anything into your vagina for at least 3 weeks. This means that you cannot use tampons or have sex. You should not douche. All vaginal discharge must stop before you can put anything in your vagina. This will help to reduce your risk of bleeding or infection.

When to call your doctor or nurse

Be sure to call your doctor or nurse **right away** if you have any of the following:

- fever of 101 F or higher
- severe belly (abdominal) pain
- heavy bleeding

Follow-up

A Pap test or colposcopy will be scheduled within a few months of having cryotherapy. Your doctor or nurse will give you additional information about your follow-up care.

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Pittsburgh, PA, USA
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This educational material was developed by a team of women's health care experts throughout UPMC, including Magee-Womens Hospital, a National Center of Excellence in Women's Health as designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For help in finding a doctor or health service that suits your needs, call the UPMC Referral Service at 412-647-UPMC (8762) or 800-533-UPMC (8762).

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