Other treatment for skin cancer

Cryotherapy

Sunspots and superficial basal cell carcinomas (BCCs) may be treated using a freezing technique called cryotherapy (sometimes called cryosurgery). This technique is not usually used for skin spots close to the eye.

Liquid nitrogen is sprayed onto the abnormal skin spot and a small area of skin around it. It can feel like a stinging sensation when applied. The liquid nitrogen freezes and kills the abnormal skin cells and creates a wound. The wound will be slightly sore and red for a few days and may weep or develop a blister.

After about ten days, a crust will form on the wound and the dead tissue will fall off. New, healthy skin cells will grow and a scar may form. Healing can take a few weeks.

The main side effect of cryotherapy is a change in skin pigmentation. The new, healed skin will probably look more pale and whiter than the surrounding skin.

Imiquimod (Aldara®)

Imiquimod (Aldara®) is a cream that stimulates the body's immune system to destroy the cancer. It is used to treat sunspots and superficial BCCs. Imiquimod cream doesn't work for some people. If it's not effective, another type of treatment will be used.

For superficial BCCs the cream is applied, five days a week, for up to six weeks. The treated skin may become red and inflamed but it is usually not sore.

Some people have other side effects, such as headaches or flu-like symptoms, while using imiquimod. It is important to ask your doctor or pharmacist about how much cream to apply and about any potential side effects.

Photodynamic therapy

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) uses a light source with a cream to treat sunspots and superficial BCCs.

First the area is gently scraped and a light-sensitive cream is applied to the skin. This is left on for about three hours, and then a light is shone on the area for seven to eight minutes. Afterwards the treated area is covered with a bandage to protect it from light for 24 hours. PDT usually needs to be repeated after about 2–4 weeks.

Some people experience pain during PDT particularly if having treatment to the face. You will be given a local anaesthetic before the PDT to help ease the pain.

Want to know where this information comes from? Click here.

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