

## **CRYOTHERAPY**

### **Your cervix.**

The cervix is the bottom part of the uterus. The opening of the cervix can be seen through the vagina. The cervix is made up of layers of cells that slowly change as they move toward the surface. There they form a protective, skin-like covering. When all of the cells of your cervix are normal, your Pap test results are normal.

### **Problems that can develop.**

Some cells of the cervix may not change normally. Then your Pap test results won't be normal. This can happen at any point in a woman's life. An abnormal Pap test result can be a sign of HPV, a virus that causes genital warts. An infection (chronic cervicitis) can also irritate the cervix. Abnormal changes may occur in cells on the surface of the cervix (dysplasia). Rarely, these cells become cancer of the cervix if they are not treated.

### **What is cryotherapy?**

Cryotherapy is an office procedure used to treat a problem in your cervix. Your doctor or other health care provider may do cryotherapy if your Pap test and colposcopy exam showed abnormal cells on your cervix. It takes only a few minutes, so you should

be in and out in less than an hour. During cryotherapy, the abnormal tissue is frozen (cryo means cold or frozen). This tissue dies, and the tissue that grows back is most often normal. There is no cutting and no bleeding. You may be given medication to take ahead of time to relieve any cramping you might feel during the treatment.

### **What happens during cryotherapy?**

You lie on an exam table with your knees bent, just as you do for a pap test. Your doctor or other health care provider first puts a small metal tube (speculum) into the vagina to hold it open. Next a thin probe is held on the cervix. The probe creates a ball of ice that freezes and kills the tissue. You may feel some cramping as the ice touches the cervix but this will go away when the treatment is over.

### **After treatment.**

You should be able to return to your normal routine that day or the next. You will have a thin, watery discharge for 2-3 weeks after treatment. There may also be some light bleeding and frequently an associated odor. Then you will have a thick, yellowish discharge for another 2-3 weeks. Your body is shedding the dead tissue. Call your health care provider if you have a fever with the discharge. Use sanitary pads, not tampons, for the first month after treatment. You may also be told not to

have sexual intercourse and not to douche for 3-4 weeks. The tissue can bleed easily until it heals. Healing takes 4-6 weeks.

### **Follow up.**

Your health care provider will see you 4-6 months after your treatment to make sure your cervix is healing well. If you were treated for dysplasia you will most likely need to have Pap test and pelvic exams more often in the future. Be sure to make an appointment as often as your health care provider advises. Once you have had a problem in your cervix, you are at a higher risk for future problems in your cervix.