

Using Frozen Gloves at BC Cancer

Information for People with Cancer and their Families



What are frozen gloves and what are they used for?

These are gloves that are stored in the freezer, at a very cold temperature. These gloves are applied to your hands, with the intention of cooling your fingers to prevent the side effect of nail changes (onycholysis), such as pain or losing your nails during chemotherapy. These can be worn during certain chemotherapy treatments, and for 15 minutes before and after.

Are there any side effects of using frozen gloves?

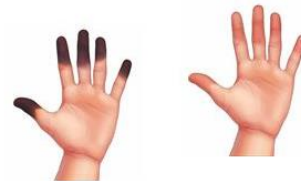
Frostbite is a possibility when using frozen gloves. Nurses will be monitoring for early signs of frostbite, and you are encouraged to let them know if the cold of the frozen gloves becomes uncomfortable or painful at any time.

What is frostbite?

Frostbite is when there is enough heat lost that it causes freezing through the formation of ice crystals within the tissues of your skin.

Symptoms of frostbite include:

- Numbness
- Tingling
- Swelling
- Patchy skin colour of shades of red/white/blue/gray/purple/brown
- Cold, hard, waxy-looking skin
- Clumsiness due to joint stiffness
- Pain
- Blisters



It is important to let your nurse know if you are feeling any of the above symptoms.

Who should use frozen gloves?

People who receive chemotherapy treatment that commonly causes nail changes and who do not have contraindications to using them. Please ask your healthcare team if you have any questions or concerns regarding your treatment and frozen gloves.

Who should not use frozen gloves?

Not all chemotherapies cause nail changes as a side effect, so not every chemotherapy treatment requires the use of frozen gloves. There are cases where you should not be using frozen gloves, even if nail changes are listed as a side effect with the treatment you are receiving. These cases include some chemotherapies that make you extremely sensitive to cold, or if you have pre-existing limited blood flow to your fingers. In these cases, the gloves will further slow the blood flow and can more easily cause frostbite.

Does BC Cancer provide frozen gloves?

Yes, we will provide the frozen gloves, if they are recommended with your treatment, and if you choose to use them. They will be stored in our freezer on your chemotherapy unit. For infection control purposes and for your protection against the cold, we will put a layer of plastic between your hand and the glove.

Can I say no to the frozen gloves if they are offered to me?

You can choose not to use frozen gloves. Please do let your nurse know if you would not like to use the frozen gloves if they are offered during your treatment.

Also, if you choose to use the gloves, you can remove them at any time if they are feeling uncomfortable or too cold. You can even partially remove your hands and leave just your fingers inside. It is your decision, and you should do what feels best for you.