

Chilblains

Podiatry Service



Your local
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provider

What are Chilblains?

A chilblain is a condition which results from an extreme reaction of the blood vessels on exposure to the cold. On exposure to cold temperatures, blood vessels in the skin constrict in an attempt to conserve heat. In some instances the area can become pale, or blue and on returning to the warmth the blood vessels dilate causing swelling and inflammation, leaving areas of skin red, itchy, burning and tender to touch.

The elderly and very young are most vulnerable. Chilblains usually appear on the extremities - fingers, toes and ears.

If a chilblain develops?

- They usually clear up on their own. You may need to see a GP or practice nurse if they do not go away.
- Don't scratch them. Soothing lotions such as calamine may help ease any the discomfort.
- If the skin is broken, apply an antiseptic dressing.
- Keep feet warm.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/chilblains/>

<https://cop.org.uk/foot-health/common-foot-problems/chilblains/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/raynauds/>

Prevention?

- Keeping your whole body warm as well as your feet, avoid extremes in temperature change where possible (avoid hot water bottles or putting feet on a radiator etc).
- Exercise will help to encourage the circulation to your extremities.
- Wear fleecy lined footwear and footwear that comes up over your ankle to retain heat.
- Avoid smoking and caffeinated drinks as this can affect the blood flow to your fingers and toes .

Raynaud's Disease/Phenomenon

Raynaud's is another condition that can cause fingers to go cold, white or discoloured. It is often linked to medical conditions such as Rheumatoid Arthritis and is more frequent in cold weather.

The symptoms of Raynaud's may last from a few minutes to a few hours.

Advice is the same as chilblains above.

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