

# Chilblains of the toes

## Body Part

Toes, Noes, Ears and fingers.

## Condition:

Chilblains or “Pernio” are the painful inflammation of small blood vessels in your skin that occur in response to repeated exposure to cold. When the weather is cold, our body re-directs the blood flow to the major organs, in order to keep them in the best condition which neglects our lesser extremities such as our toes.

## Summary:

No one knows exactly what causes chilblains. They may be an abnormal reaction of your body to cold exposure followed by rewarming. Sudden warming of cold skin can cause small blood vessels under the skin to expand more quickly than nearby larger blood vessels can handle causing them to either bottleneck and or burst - causing the irritation.

## Causative factors are:

- Clothing that is too tight can cause extra restriction in the blood vessels.
- Exposed lesser extremities in cold weather.
- Women are more likely to get it than men.
- Seasons - Autumn and Winter.
- Having poor circulation. People with poor circulation tend to be more sensitive to changes in temperature, making them more susceptible to chilblains.
- Patients with Raynaud’s disease are more likely to get chilblains as their micro circulation in their lesser extremities are compromised.
- Having an autoimmune disorder such as Lupus.

## Symptoms:

- Itching
- Red patches
- Pain
  - Swelling and blistering can lead to a breakdown in the skin and as a result infection which may be detrimental in high risk patients.

## Treatment:

- Keep the affected areas warm. This means staying out of the cold, or wearing warm gloves, socks, etc, when outdoors.
- Keep your core warm by wearing multiple layers of clothing to trap heat inside.
- Hirudoid cream can be purchased from GenHealth that assists in healing chilblains.
- If you smoke then you should try to stop, as smoking can make chilblains worse.
- Dry feet thoroughly after showering or bathing.
- Use woollen or cotton socks to allow your feet to 'breathe'.
- Have some gentle exercise, like walking, every day to improve peripheral circulation.
- Consult your GP for Persistent chilblains that have become chronic as they can be treated by certain medications.
- After being in the cold do not heat the skin too quickly, but rather gradually warm them up as this can

As always prevention is better than cure. So if you are prone to chilblains or exposed to any of the aforementioned risk factors then make sure you follow the above recommendations.

### Prognosis:

Depending on the severity of the chilblains and what your overall health is like, it could take 1-3 weeks for the chilblains to heal. Longer if you are a high risk patient. Shorter if you're fit and healthy.



### Further information:

For further information, please contact our friendly team at Gen Health.

Picture Link:

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326069>