

Chilblains

This leaflet is intended to provide simple practical information about how you can prevent or treat problems yourself.

Chilblains on your feet are caused by extremes of temperature affecting the circulation. Tiny blood vessels become too narrow during chilly weather or in damp and draughty conditions.

Your toes can become red and very itchy when warm or blue and painful when cold.

This may result in the skin becoming damaged and therefore there is a risk of infection.

You will probably notice chilblains starting as the colder weather begins.

Prevention

Keep yourself warm, especially your legs and feet.

Try wearing trousers and socks if you normally wear a skirt and stockings.

Woolly tights or thicker soled shoes can also help keep your feet warm.

You could wear a couple of pairs of thin socks and several thin layers of clothing – this traps air and helps to

keep you warm all over. Long johns are still a good idea in winter weather!

Put moisturising cream on your feet every day to help stop cracks developing.

Warm your bed. If you use a hot water bottle, take it out of the bed before you get in.

If your feet get cold at night, put on a pair of socks to sleep in.

Try to keep your house warm and eat regular hot meals every day during the chilly weather.

Do not let your feet get too cold, but if they do, do not warm them up too quickly. Never toast them in front of the fire or on a hot water bottle – this will give you chilblains faster than anything!

If your feet are cold, do not put them in hot water.

Taking plenty of gentle exercise to help improve circulation.

You can use chilblain cream to help stop chilblains forming. Start using this before the winter weather really starts. You can buy it from any chemist.

Remember – try not to let your feet get too cold. Wrap up warm!

Treatment

If you have chilblains, do not scratch them as this may lead to infection. Use calamine lotion, witch hazel or chilblain cream to soothe the itching and burning.

If a chilblain has broken or cracked, just keep it covered with a clean dressing every day. Ask your doctor or nurse for advice.

Footwear

Avoid pressure from tight footwear. Tight shoes restrict the circulation to toes and feet.

Ensure shoes and slippers fit correctly.

The shoe should be the correct length, width and depth for your foot. There should be 1 cm or 0.5 inches between the end of your longest toe and the end of your shoe.

The upper should be soft with no hard seams or ridges and made from a natural fibre such as leather which allows moisture to evaporate.

The shoe needs to hold your foot firmly in place with an adjustable fastening, i.e. laces, straps with buckles or Velcro.

The toe box should be round and deep to give the toes room to move.

The heel should be less than 4cm or 1.5 inches high, broad and stable.

The shoe needs a firm heel counter that fits snugly around the back of the heel and helps to maintain and stabilise the heel in place as the shoe makes contact with the ground.

Ideally the shoe will have a thick, lightweight, flexible rubber sole of a non-slip material.

You can search for other information leaflets on www.patient.co.uk and your G.P. also has access to this website.

It is recommended that you follow the advice in this leaflet and only contact the podiatry department should the symptoms not improve.

If you are aged between 19-60 years you will need a G.P. Referral.

Please contact Podiatry
Appointment Office
01803 217712

If you:
--require further information
--require this leaflet in a different format

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.



Torbay and South Devon
NHS Foundation Trust

PATIENT INFORMATION

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Department of Podiatry
And Foot health