



Raynaud phenomenon

What is Raynaud phenomenon?

- Raynaud phenomenon occurs when the skin of the fingers and toes becomes white, cold and numb. Later, the skin may turn blue or red.
- This happens when something 'triggers' the blood vessels in the skin to narrow (constrict). This reduces the flow of blood to that area.
- An episode may last less than a minute or up to a few hours. As blood flow returns, the fingers and toes may tingle.
- Complications may include skin sores and poor healing in the fingers and toes.
- Raynaud phenomenon may occur on its own (primary) or it may occur with other diseases (secondary).

What can trigger Raynaud phenomenon?

Cold



- Going outside when it is cold.
- Touching something cold without mittens.
- Air conditioning or being in a cold room.

Caffeine



- Drinking beverages that contain caffeine, such as coffee, tea or cola.
- Eating chocolate, which contains caffeine.

Stress



- Stressful or emotional events.

Smoking or using products that contain nicotine to stop smoking.

Hormone changes during a girl's monthly menstrual cycle.

What should I do when I have an episode?

- Treat the affected areas by running them under warm (not hot) water or soaking them in a warm bath.

How can I prevent an episode?

Keep warm

- Stay warm when outside in cold weather. Wear warm mittens, socks and boots. A hat and layers of clothing are also important to keep your body warm.
- Do not stay out in the cold for long. Take breaks often and go inside to warm up.
- Use a warming pack on the parts of your body that are cold.
- Stay warm indoors. Keep extra clothing with you. Wear layers of clothes, mittens, socks, or a scarf if needed.



Avoid caffeine

- Do not drink a lot of coffee, tea or cola.
- Do not eat a lot of chocolate.

Stay active

- Regular physical activity can keep the blood vessels in your hands and feet healthy.

Do not smoke or use smoking cessation products that contain nicotine.

Reduce stress

- Identify stressful situations and try to avoid them if possible.
- Find ways to cope with stress. Examples are: relaxation, deep breathing, meditation, yoga and massage.

Check your medications

- Review all your medications (including those you buy without a prescription) with your doctor or pharmacist to make sure they are safe and do not constrict blood vessels.
- If episodes occur often or complications develop, your doctor may recommend a medication to expand (dilate) blood vessels.