

Our highly skilled podiatrists

are registered with the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC) and members of the College of Podiatrists. The practice is accredited by the College of Podiatrists (CoP).

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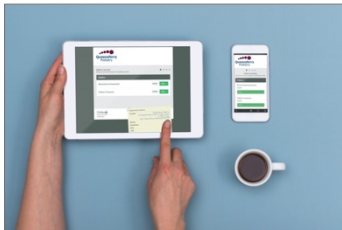
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Professional and caring podiatrists

Chilblains



Treatment Advice

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What are chilblains?

Chilblains are small, itchy, painful, red swellings on the skin. They are caused by an abnormal skin reaction to cold. They tend to occur on 'extremities' that easily become cold - that is, your toes, fingers, nose and earlobes.

A few signs and symptoms associated with chilblains are:

- burning sensation
- intense itching
- redness on the affected area
- swelling
- dryness
- skin in the affected area turning red to dark blue, followed by inflammation



Cause of chilblains?

It's not very clear what exactly causes this condition. They are caused by an abnormal skin reaction to cold. However, here are a few factors that may increase your risk of ending up with chilblains:

- having poor blood circulation
- improper clothing
- smoking
- living in a region with a damp climate
- having lupus or Raynaud's phenomenon (it may cause its own types of sores)
- having a low body mass index (BMI)

The condition also affects more women than men. Other risk factors include a family history of chilblains and a poor diet.

What can help?

Do

- avoid being outside when it's cold or damp
- wear warm, waterproof clothing, gloves and thick socks
- thermal insoles if you do go out when it's cold or damp

Don't

- do not put your feet or hands on a radiator or under hot water to warm them up
- do not smoke or have drinks that have caffeine in them – this can affect the flow of blood in your fingers and toes

Usually, chilblains go away of their own accord within a week or two. You may get more if you are prone to them and are exposed to cold conditions.

Treatments

Although a number of different medical treatments have been tried, there is little reliable evidence to show that they work, and it is for this reason that prevention is most important.

If the chilblains have not broken, you can try using creams, such as Geywol warming balm. If the chilblain has ulcerated, apply an antiseptic dressing. If you have diabetes or are undergoing medical treatment, do have the ulcer assessed by your GP or podiatrist.

Medicines are not usually needed however, a tablet called Nifedipine, can open wide (dilate) the small blood vessels and may help to treat chilblains which are not settling within the normal time. Occasionally it may also be used to prevent chilblains in the winter months in people who have repeated symptoms.