

Chilblains

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What are chilblains?

Chilblains are areas of inflamed skin, which develop as a result of exposure to extremes of temperature. They are found more commonly in women, children, the elderly and people with poor circulation.

The areas most commonly affected are the toes, soles of feet and the backs of heels but they can also affect any exposed areas of skin, such as fingers and ears.

What do they look like?

Red or purple discoloured areas of skin, which may be painful, itchy and can break open.

How to prevent chilblains

- Dress warmly. Two thin layers are more insulating than one.
- Wear warm socks but avoid tight fitting socks. Shoes should have a thick sole to prevent heat loss and enough room to allow warm air to circulate. Wear bed socks at night to prevent excessive heat loss.
- Avoid cold draughty rooms and warm the bed before getting in.
- After being out in the cold, avoid heating your feet rapidly in front of the fire, with a hot water bottle or in a hot shower or bath as this can make the condition worse.
- Eat regular hot meals.

What should I do if I have a chilblain?

- Use a chilblain ointment/paint from the chemist. There are many brands to choose from. If in doubt, ask your Pharmacist/Podiatrist for advice and follow the instructions as directed on the tube.

- Do not scratch the skin, as it is easily broken and can become infected. If chilblains break, cover with a dry sterile dressing.
- Keep active as this helps the circulation flow to the legs, feet and arms.
- Thermal insoles can be a good investment providing there is plenty of room in the shoes, without making them a tight fit.

Further information or advice

If you have any problems or need extra advice, contact a HCPC registered podiatrist at the Podiatry Department.

Local podiatry contact details

North:

Email: rduh.podiatry@nhs.net

Tel: 01271 341509

East:

Email: rduh.podiatryappointments-eastern@nhs.net

Tel: 03452 667772

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern, please contact:

PALS Mid Devon, East Devon and Exeter

- call 01392 402093 or email rduh.pals-eastern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital in Wonford, Exeter.

PALS North Devon

- call 01271 314090 or email rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at the North Devon District Hospital in Barnstaple.

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