

Handy Hints on Keeping Warm

This leaflet is intended to provide information on keeping warm, whether you have Raynaud's or just feel the cold.

RAYNAUD'S

Raynaud's is a condition in which the blood supply to the extremities is temporarily interrupted, causing the fingers to change colour. During an attack they first become white and dead looking. They may then turn blue and finally bright red and burning when the blood flow is restored. There may be considerable pain, numbness or tingling. An attack will often be triggered by exposure to the cold, any slight changes in temperature or touching cold objects. Emotions, such as anxiety, may also play a part as can smoking. Cold temperatures or even a slight change in temperature can cause a Raynaud's attack.

By planning ahead and following a few simple rules, such as wearing suitable clothing and having heating aids readily available, you will be in a better position to keep warm in fluctuating temperatures. This should help to minimise the problems which may otherwise cause you pain or discomfort.

EXERCISE

Try to learn a few basic exercises which are within your own physical limitations. Gentle exercise such as walking or moving your arms and legs, even when sitting, will help to stimulate the circulation. Should the cold cause you to lose feeling in your fingers and toes, reheat them slowly.

HEATING AIDS

A selection of heating aids and gadgets are available, these include disposable, rechargeable and microwaveable heat packs and silver socks and gloves.

AT NIGHT

Take the chill off the bed with a hot water bottle or use an electric blanket. Make sure to turn your blanket off before getting into bed unless you have an all night model. Wear flannelette night clothes, night cap, bed socks, gloves etc. Duvets are warm without being too heavy but keep extra blankets at hand during a cold spell. Thermal underblankets add extra warmth.

AIR CONDITIONING

It is advisable to have a headscarf to wear especially when in air conditioned buildings and on aircraft when the cold air circulates around your neck.



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CLOTHING

If you have to go out into the cold, wear several thin layers of clothing rather than one thick layer, as the air trapped between the layers will help to insulate your body. Tight clothing should be avoided as this may restrict your blood flow.

Wear some form of headgear, as a considerable amount of heat is lost from the head area. The trunk should also be kept warm to protect the major organs of the body.

Thermal clothing is excellent, especially underwear which has long sleeves and long legs. Natural fibres such as wool, cotton or silk will keep you warmer than most synthetic ones. A pair of thin cotton or silk gloves under thicker mittens or gloves can give added warmth.

Gloves and socks made with pure silver minimise the radiative heat loss by actively reflecting 95% of the body's energy back to the skin. This makes them a lot warmer compared to conventional socks and gloves.

A scarf can keep the nose, mouth and cheeks warm and there are even face masks which fit over the nose, designed to give full face, neck and ear protection in a cold breeze. A polo neck will help to keep the neck warm.

EATING FOR WARMTH

Your body needs plenty of warming 'fuel' if you are going to brave the cold. Start the day with a bowl of hot porridge or cereal with warm milk. Try to eat lots of small meals to maintain your energy and heat levels and whenever possible have a hot meal at midday.

Plenty of hot drinks especially between meals and before retiring to bed are essential. Keep a good supply of food in the house and eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Good sources of protein and energy are bread, milk, meat, fish, eggs, potatoes and baked beans. Keep a pair of oven gloves by the fridge. Attacks can be brought on just by going into the freezer or picking up a cold object.

When going out, microwave a couple of jacket potatoes then wrap in tin foil and put in your pockets. They will keep your hands warm and provide you with something to eat when you get hungry!

Anyone with Raynaud's knows the importance of keeping warm. Going outside into the cold or any slight change in temperature can have severe consequences.

- Avoid touching cold surfaces and objects such as milk bottles.
- Always wear insulated gloves before going into the fridge or freezer.
- Don't have ice cold drinks straight from the fridge.
- When going on a car journey, take a flask of hot water or soup with you just in case you need it in cold weather.
- If children are playing in the snow encourage them to wear plastic disposable gloves over their woollen ones as getting wet makes the cold worse.
- On a cold evening you can get heat from ironing. A metallised ironing board cover will reflect heat and help to keep you warm.
- A hair dryer is useful for warming clothes and shoes before going out.
- Have a hot bath before going to bed. It will help to warm your body enabling you to have a good nights sleep.
- After a bath leave the water in while you dress - it will give off enough heat to keep you warm.
- Stop smoking - cigarette smoke is harmful for everyone and it has been proved that smoking can reduce the temperature by one degree over a twenty minute period.
- Use warm air hand dryers in public places to warm your hands when shopping.

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- Keep your clothes and shoes for the next day in the airing cupboard overnight.
- The colour red signifies warmth. Your eyes can tell you that you are warmer than the temperature suggests. Fires which have a red glow make you feel warmer than those which just give out heat by fan or convector. Try a bowl of red flowers, a red lamp shade or bulb to add a warm look to your living room.
- Alcohol in moderation can help to stimulate the circulation but do not mix alcohol with medication.
- Fill a box with polystyrene balls, of the type usually found in packaging and place your hands in it. This is a good way of warming the hands.

- When watching television place a hot water bottle behind your back or under your feet.
- Keep doors closed - leaving a door open to talk to the milkman or neighbour can drastically reduce the temperature in your house.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth when outdoors - this stops cold air being sucked in through your mouth and sent straight to your lungs. The nose acts as a filter.
- Use shoulder bags for shopping where possible rather than ones with handles as these can cause restriction of blood to the fingers.
- Make a delicious warming drink with finely minced crystallised ginger. Just add lemon juice, ginger and a teaspoon of honey to boiling water. It is not only tasty but will also help to boost the circulation.

Plan ahead

Make sure you have hand warmers with you. Carry a pair of gloves or mittens with you at all times - frozen food aisles in supermarkets can be extremely cold, especially when handling food packaging.

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