

Patient information

Chilblains

What are chilblains?

These occur when the blood vessels supplying the skin react in an abnormal way to cold and damp. They are found most often on the backs of the heels and on toes.

They may look blue in colour and feel very cold, or else they may be feeling hot, red and throb or feel itchy.

If your circulation is poor, then the chilblains may last several weeks and you have a greater chance of them developing into an open wound, especially if you do not look after them. Smoking may also reduce the chance of them healing quickly



Who gets them?

Although chilblains are common, the condition mainly affects young adults working outdoors in cold places or people who do not wear socks or tights in winter. Elderly people whose circulation is less efficient than it used to be, people who don't take enough exercise and those suffering from anaemia are also susceptible

How to avoid chilblains

Aim to keep your feet at a constant temperature. Avoid letting them get too hot or too cold if possible.

Wear thicker soled shoes for insulation and use thermal or insulating insoles inside your shoes - taking care that there is enough room within the shoe to avoid rubbing.

Wear woolen or thermal socks or tights or else wear several thin layers for extra warmth for example thermal leggings.

Invest in thermal underwear and use loose woolen bed socks at night if necessary.

DO NOT put your feet onto direct heat - for example on a hot water bottle or radiator.



What else can you do to treat chilblains yourself?

During the hot, itchy stage use Witch hazel to cool them down.

In the blue, cold stage gently warm them with medicaments that your Pharmacist may recommend.

Open chilblains should be cleaned with warm salty water and covered with a clean non - adherent, dry dressing such as Melolin, plaster.

*Please note if you are **diabetic, have poor circulation, or are immunosuppressed and your chilblains are not improving in a few days**, please then seek help from your GP or Podiatrist as you are more prone to infection which may need additional treatment.*

For more information

If you require any assistance, then please contact Podiatry services on 0300 1314536

Or email

Esh-tr.podiatryenquiries@nhs.net

Sources of information.

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust <https://www.esht.nhs.uk/service/podiatry/>
The Health and Care Professions Council www.hcpc-uk.org
The Royal College of Podiatry www.cop.uk
NHS choices www.nhs.uk

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff

use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4500 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
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The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Community Health and Integrated Care

Next review date: August 2025
Responsible clinician/author: Elaine Tate Head Of Podiatry and Orthotics Services

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