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## Chilblains

Chilblains are small, itchy, painful lumps that develop on the skin. They occur as an abnormal response to temperature change, usually cold.

They tend to occur on the extremities that are more prone to becoming cold that is the toes, fingers, nose and ears. However, other areas of skin sometimes develop chilblains when they become cold, for example your heels and lowers legs.

Chilblains are common: it is thought that between one and ten people in the UK get chilblains at some stage in their life. Some people are more prone to chilblain development than others. The tiny blood vessels under the skin constrict when the skin becomes cold. The blood supply to these areas of skin then becomes very slow. If this blood supply does not increase as the temperature of the skin increases there is some leakage of fluid from the blood vessels into the tissues which causes inflammation and swelling leading to chilblains.

The speed or rate of temperature change plays a part in some people getting chilblains. If they warm up cold skin too quickly, for example with a hot water bottle or by sitting close to a fire, chilblains develop.

Some people with poor circulation or taking medication such as beta blockers are more prone to developing chilblains. However, most chilblains occur in people who are otherwise healthy.

### **Symptoms of chilblains:**

Chilblains occur several hours after being exposed to the cold. You may get just one chilblain or several may develop. Chilblains can be very itchy and

can also develop a burning sensation which is typical. They are usually red in colour to start with but can become purple. Pain and tenderness over the chilblain often develops. Occasionally the skin may break down to leave a small ulcer which is prone to infection. Typically chilblains last between seven and ten days and they gradually resolve. Some people get recurring bouts of chilblains each winter.



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### **Prevention of chilblains:**

If you are prone to chilblains keep your hands and feet warm when out in the cold. After being in the cold do not heat the skin up quickly but gradually warm up. Some drugs may constrict smaller blood vessels. Inform your GP if you become prone to chilblains after starting your medication.

### **Treatment of chilblains:**

- 1) Insulated insoles such as frelen are very helpful in boots and Wellingtons
- 2) Akileine cream for the prevention of chilblains
- 3) Akileine Sports Start which stimulates micro circulation
- 4) Nelsons chilblain cream is a soothing cream to apply to chilblains

There is second type of chilblain which is less common which I term a static phase chilblain. These occur on the foot over areas of excess pressure such as the ends of the toes and soles of the feet. They are purple in colour and cold to the touch and often associated with reduced circulation and some medical conditions such as polio.

### **Treatments:**

This type of chilblain responds very well to gentle ultra-sound therapy together with insulated insoles and creams to stimulate circulation such as the Akileine Smart. For this type of chilblain on the soles of the feet simple insulated insoles can be modified to distribute pressure and increase blood flow.