

# Suffering from Cold Hands & Feet?

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Do you experience pain in your hands and feet during winter months, while holding a cold drink, or with putting something in the freezer? Do your fingers and toes turn white, then blue, and then red when exposed to cold temperatures? If any of these apply, you might be experiencing symptoms of Raynaud's phenomenon.

Raynaud's phenomenon is more common in women than it is in men and usually begins between the ages of 20-45. This condition causes a spasm to occur in the blood vessels supplying blood flow to the fingers, toes, nose and ears, interrupting blood flow to these areas. This can occur when exposed to cold temperatures or emotional stress. Due to lack of blood flow, these areas will often turn white and/or blue and a sensation of numbness may occur. When the spasm subsides, the affected areas will often turn red as blood flow returns. This return of blood flow may cause a throbbing, aching, or tingling sensation, and a slight swelling may be noted.

These attacks can last anywhere from a few minutes to hours.

The symptoms of Raynaud's phenomenon can be triggered by being outside for only a few minutes on a cold winter day, holding a cold drink, or even being in an air-conditioned environment. This presents a challenge for those of us enduring Minnesota winters, as wearing gloves 24 hours a day is not a practical solution. If you do experience the symptoms of Raynaud's phenomenon, there are a few things you can do. Start by protecting yourself from the cold, limiting exposure to cigarette smoke, and decreasing caffeine intake.

- The following are a few hints to help while you are having symptoms:
- Move to a warmer room or area (or Arizona-I hear it is warm there).
- Put your hands in your armpits to warm them up.
- Keep fingers and toes moving by wiggling them to help increase circulation.
- Perform large motions with your arms (i.e. windmill motion).
- Place your fingers or toes under warm water.
- Do not use hot water as your sensation may be altered.

If symptoms become debilitating, seek medical attention as this can lead to more serious problems.