

Chilblains

What are Chilblains?

Chilblains are small itchy, red swellings on the skin, which can become increasingly painful, can swell and then dry out leaving cracks in the skin which expose the foot to the risk of infection. They occur on the toes, particularly the smaller ones, fingers, the face, especially the nose, and the lobes of the ears. They can also occur on areas of the feet exposed to pressure, for instance, on a bunion or where the second toe is squeezed by tight shoes.

What causes them?

Chilblains are caused by the skin's abnormal reaction to cold. Damp or draughty conditions, dietary factors and hormonal imbalance can be contributory factors. If the skin is chilled, and is then followed by too rapid warming next to a fire or hot water bottle, chilblains may result.



What can I do?

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WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS

With the onset of the cold weather, susceptible people will experience burning and itching on their hands and feet. On going into a warm room, the itching and burning is intensified. There may be some swelling or redness, and in extreme cases, the surface of the skin may break, and sores (ulcers) may develop.

IF CHILBLAINS HAVE DEVELOPED

Don't scratch them; soothing lotions such as witch hazel or calamine will take away most of the discomfort.

If the chilblain has ulcerated, apply an antiseptic dressing. If you have diabetes or undergoing medical treatment, have the ulcer assessed by your GP or chiropodist/podiatrist.

