

# Raynaud's Disease

Feeling Blue?

HARTNELL COLLEGE

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Authored by: Kathy Black

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## Introduction

Raynaud's (ray-NOHZ) disease is a circulatory condition that causes some areas of your body such as your fingers, toes, the tip of your nose and your ears , to feel numb and cool in response to cold temperatures or stress. In Raynaud's disease, smaller arteries that supply blood to your skin narrow, limiting blood circulation to affected areas. Raynaud's is named after French physician Maurice Raynaud (1814–1881). Stress and cold can trigger an attack of Raynaud's.

I'm interested learning more about this disease because my daughter has it. It is especially worrisome because sometimes Raynaud's can be a symptom of a more serious condition such as Lupus. If a person is solely affected with symptoms of Raynaud's it is called primary Raynaud's but if it occurs with a more serious disease such as Lupus, it is called secondary Raynaud's.

About 5 percent of the U.S. population has Raynaud's. For most people who have primary Raynaud's, the disorder is more of a bother than a serious illness. They usually can manage the condition with minor lifestyle changes.

## The risk factors for primary Raynaud's include:

- Gender. Women are more likely to have primary Raynaud's than men.
- Age. Primary Raynaud's usually develops before the age of 30.
- Family history. Primary Raynaud's may occur in members of the same family.
- Living in a cold climate. Cold temperatures can trigger Raynaud's attacks.<sup>1</sup> Causes

### Cold temperatures<sup>~</sup>

When your body is exposed to cold temperatures, your extremities lose heat. Your body slows down blood supply to your fingers and toes to preserve your body's core temperature. Your body specifically reduces blood flow by narrowing the small arteries under the skin of your extremities. In people with Raynaud's, this normal response is exaggerated.

### Stress<sup>~</sup>

Stress causes a similar reaction to cold in the body. The body's response may be exaggerated in people with Raynaud's.

### Heredity<sup>~</sup>

Raynaud's can be an inherited disorder

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/raynaud/atrisk.html>

## Symptoms

- ◆ Cold fingers and toes
- ◆ A Sequence of color changes in your skin in response to cold or stress. Usually white then blue and finally red as blood flow returns to affected areas.
- ◆ Numb, prickly feeling or stinging pain upon warming or relief of stress
- ◆ Turn red, throb, tingle, burn, or feel numb as blood flow returns to the affected areas
- ◆ Raynaud's attacks can last less than a minute or as long as several hours. Attacks can occur daily or weekly.<sup>2</sup>

## Cures

There is no known cure for Raynaud's. Most cases can be managed with some lifestyle changes but in more severe cases, it can be managed with medication to prevent permanent damage to toes or fingers.

Primary care doctors and internists often diagnose and treat Raynaud's. Your doctor may ask about your risk factors for Raynaud's. He or she also may ask about your signs and symptoms when you're exposed to cold temperatures or stress.

Your doctor will look at your fingers and toes to check the health of your skin and nails and to check blood flow to these areas. Your doctor also may do a more complete physical exam to check for signs of diseases and conditions that are linked to secondary Raynaud's.

## Diagnostic Tests and Procedures

Your doctor may recommend a cold stimulation test to check for Raynaud's and related conditions.

A cold stimulation test can be used to trigger Raynaud's symptoms. For this test, a small device that measures temperature is taped to your fingers. Your hands are then exposed to cold—they're usually briefly put into ice water.

Your hands are then removed from the cold, and the device measures how quickly your fingers return to their normal temperature. If you have Raynaud's, it may take more than 20 minutes for your fingers to return to their normal temperature.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/raynaud/signs.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/raynaud/diagnosis.html>

## Remedies

<b>Don't smoke</b>	<b>Avoid Caffeine</b>
<b>Exercise</b>	<b>Take Care of your hands and feet</b>
<b>Control Stress</b>	<b>Avoid workplace triggers</b>

## Lifestyle Changes

Lifestyle changes can help you avoid things that may trigger a Raynaud's attack. Examples of such triggers include cold temperatures, emotional stress, workplace or recreational factors, and contact with certain chemicals or medicines.

### To protect yourself from cold temperatures:

- ❖ Wear a hat, mittens, and warm socks and shoes during cold weather. Layer your clothing for extra warmth.
- ❖ Put hand and foot warmers in your mittens, boots, socks, or pockets.
- ❖ Turn down air conditioning or dress warmly while in an air-conditioned space.
- ❖ Warm up your car before driving in cold weather.
- ❖ Wear gloves or mittens when taking food out of the refrigerator or freezer (if cold temperatures severely affect you).

### Try to avoid things that make you upset or stressed.

Learn ways to handle stress that you can't avoid. Exercise helps some people cope with stress. Other people listen to music or focus on something calm or peaceful to reduce stress. Some people learn yoga, tai chi, or meditation.

Try to avoid workplace and recreational triggers. For example, limit the use of vibrating tools, such as drills. Wear proper protective gear if you work with industrial chemicals. Also, try to limit repetitive hand actions, such as typing or playing the piano.

## Managing the Condition

If lifestyle changes don't control Raynaud's, your doctor may prescribe medication to improve blood flow to your fingers and toes. Examples of medicines used to treat Raynaud's include calcium channel blockers, alpha blockers or prescription skin creams.<sup>4</sup>

I have also seen advertisements for infrared socks and gloves that are supposed to improve blood flow in people with Raynaud's.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/raynaud/treatment.html>

## Poster

# Raynaud's Syndrome



I chose to research Raynaud's disease because my daughter was diagnosed with it when she was eight years old. She is now twenty-three and still deals with it every day. The most interesting thing I learned about the disease is that stress can set off an attack as well as cold temperatures. I used the National Institutes of Health website for most of my information. I would like to know if certain foods or supplements would help people with Raynaud's. It is a rare condition so most Doctors don't know much about it.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.raynaudsgloves.com/>

## Bibliography

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