



CHILBLAINS





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Cause

Chilblains occur when the small blood vessels in the extremities are exposed to extreme temperature changes.. The body's circulatory system is made up of arteries, veins and capillaries. Capillaries are the smallest and most fragile vessels used to transport blood around the body and they are found at the extremities. In hot conditions the blood vessels close to the surface of the skin allowing excess heat to be lost into the air cooling the body. In contrast when it is cold, these blood vessels constrict to reduce blood flow to these areas and in turn reduce the amount of heat lost from the body. Due to the fragility of the capillaries these rapid temperature changes can lead to damage of these vessels.

Symptoms

Chilblains often present as red, swollen, itchy patches of skin that are often seen on the extremities such as toes, fingertips, ears and nose. In dancers we commonly see them on the toes due to dancers wearing very little on their feet whilst dancing, especially in the colder climates.

Treatment

Many chilblains can be treated at home, as well as keeping the body warm and at a constant temperature you can also:

- Use heat gels such as deep heat or vicks vapour rub to increase circulation around your chilblains
- Avoid scratching as this can lead to damage of the fragile skin and is then a port for infections
- If a break in the skin occurs make sure it is dressed with antiseptic to reduce the risk of infection

Please consult your podiatrist for management of your chilblains if the tissue becomes ulcerated, there is an increase in pain or it is limiting your ability to dance.