



## Autoimmune Resource and Research Centre

### Information Sheet

#### RAYNAUD'S PHENOMENON - HANDY HINTS

Here is a collection of hints that have been collected from many different sources, many of them may be helpful to you in trying to prevent attacks of Raynaud's from occurring.

#### **The following tips can help you prevent getting chilled:**

Always wear a hat: It is true that you lose a lot of heat through the top of your head. Covering the head helps to keep the whole body warm by preventing heat from escaping.

Dress warmly: Layers of loose clothes trap warm air around your body. Cotton socks worn over wool socks help keep the feet warm and dry. Mittens are warmer than gloves because the fingers keep each other warm. Tight gloves can cut off blood circulation in the fingers.

Don't get wet: As water on the skin evaporates, it cools the skin - just the opposite of what you want.

Cover up exposed skin: If it is very cold and windy, putting a scarf across your nose and cheeks will protect them and help you breathe better. If you are so cold that it hurts, get inside. The pain in your body is a warning signal.

#### **REMEMBER**

Try to avoid changes in temperature - remember a change in temperature is even more likely to bring on an attack than just being in the cold. Do not sit in draughts.

Keep your finger nails and hands clean at all times. Be particularly careful of your hands and protect with suitable gloves when gardening or doing jobs around the house.

Avoid cold cures and nasal drops which contain Ephedrine as this can cause problems for Raynaud's sufferers.

**STOP SMOKING** - smoking has a direct effect on the circulation and will make Raynaud's worse. Do not get things from the freezer without insulated gloves or mittens. Try to get someone else to defrost your fridge for you as this can be a difficult and painful chore. (If planning to buy a new refrigerator, consider a 'frost free' fridge).

Do not handle cold items such as milk bottles straight from the fridge as this can bring on a spasm in the fingers.

A hot water bottle (not too hot) is effective to take on a car journey, especially if visiting friends who will give you a refill for the return journey.

Avoid situations which cause you stress and try to relax at some time every day, even if only for a few minutes.

Do not carry heavy shopping bags with handles as this can cause restriction of blood to the fingers - use shoulder bags where possible.

Regular movement and exercise helps to keep your skin flexible and maintains better blood flow.

Regular exercise has been shown to improve Raynaud's. Try to keep up a daily routine of gentle exercises in order to increase the blood supply to the tissues.

At night, use an electric blanket or enough covers to keep you warm. Before you get into bed, turn your electric blanket on to warm the sheets. If your hands and feet tend to get cold when you sleep, wear mittens and socks to bed.

Keep the rooms you use most often at a comfortable temperature.

Start running your bath or shower water ahead of time so that you do not touch cold water. Be careful not to get chilled getting in and out of the tub or shower.

Have someone start your car and turn on the heater a few minutes before you leave the house, if possible. (If your car is in a garage, remember the garage door should be open while the motor is running).

Excess sweating can make it hard to stay warm because sweat actually cools the body. During cool weather, wear thin garments next to the skin or wool underwear and thermal socks lined with cotton. The cotton layer moves the sweat away from the skin.

As damp coldness is the worst for provoking an attack, do not peel vegetables under a running tap, hose the garden if the hose nozzle leaks or hang wet clothes on a clothes line. A clothes dryer is a wonderful aid if this can be afforded. Clothes do last longer without the harsh sun and buffeting wind.

Keep your hands moisturised. When you have an attack, try to stay calm. Gently rewarm your fingers or toes as soon as you can. Placing your hands under your armpits often helps. Try wiggling your fingers or toes; move or walk around to try and improve your circulation. If you can, run warm, not hot, water over the affected part of your body until normal colour returns.

ARRC stocks natural silver fibre anti-bacterial gloves and mittens for cold hands and fingers. They are designed for people living with Raynaud's and Scleroderma, undergoing chemotherapy treatment and peripheral neuropathy pain.

© ARRC 2016

The Autoimmune Resource and Research Centre (ARRC) is a Not for Profit registered health promotion charity. ARRC provides education, support and research services for people living with a range of systemic and organ-specific autoimmune diseases. For more information, education and support contact ARRC

**Website:** [www.autoimmune.org.au](http://www.autoimmune.org.au)

**Email:** [arc@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au](mailto:arc@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au)

**Address:** 2<sup>nd</sup> flr, Pathology North Bld, John Hunter Hospital, New Lambton Heights, NSW Australia 2305

**ARRC information for patients, carers & Health Professionals**

**Disclaimer**

This document has been developed and peer reviewed by ARRC and is based on expert opinion and the available published literature at the time of review. Information contained in this document is not intended to replace medical advice and any questions regarding a medical diagnosis or treatment should be directed to a medical practitioner. The development of this document is not funded by any commercial sources and is not influenced by commercial organisations. For more information about ARRC and its *policies & procedures* please refer to our website.

**Content last updated November 2016**

**Reviewed by Judy Knapp, Clinical Trial Nurse**