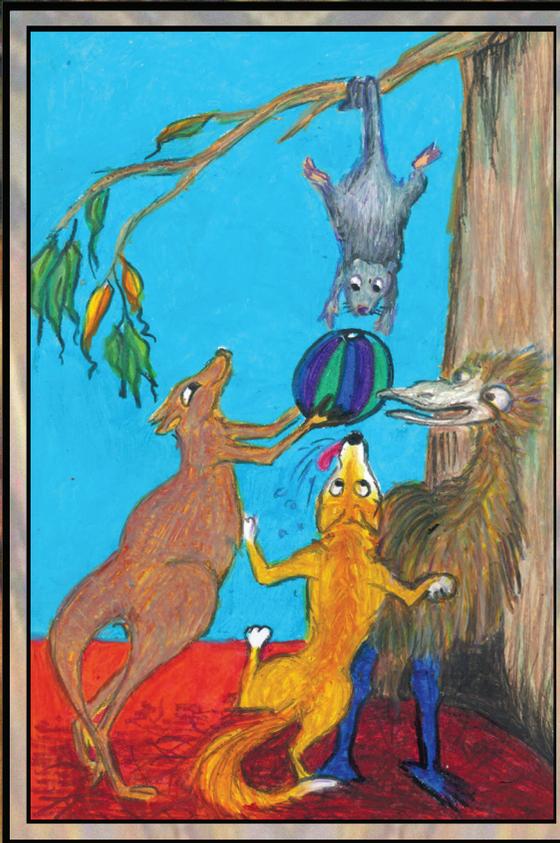


## Things that may be helpful

- ➔ Do wear gloves to protect from:
    - ➔ Cold and windy outside temperature.
    - ➔ Air conditioned rooms and cars.
    - ➔ Sudden temperature changes e.g fridge, freezer, cold running water;even think about protection when:
    - ➔ Hanging cold wet washing out
    - ➔ Shopping in open fridge freezer sections.
  - ➔ Use a drink holder to protect from cold glasses and bottles when drinking.
  - ➔ Do keep your whole body warm.
  - ➔ Don't smoke.
  - ➔ Don't drink too much coffee, tea or 'energy' drinks.
  - ➔ Do keep fit and exercise regularly.
  - ➔ Do pay attention to small cuts and abrasions treat them quickly so that they don't get infected. If they are not healing, see your doctor.
  - ➔ Do check if medications (prescribed or otherwise) are likely to trigger or aggravate your Raynaud's.
  - ➔ Learning to keep your emotions in balance can help protect your general health and wellbeing as well as Raynaud's.
  - ➔ Learning to meditate or other calming techniques when emotionally upset can help to reduce episodes.
  - ➔ Severity of episodes can be reduced by GENTLY warming your hands and feet for e.g.
    - ➔ Placing hands in warm water, NOT HOT.
    - ➔ Placing hands between legs, under armpits or under your bottom.
    - ➔ Using artificial hand and foot warming aids.
  - ➔ Ask for help to do cold and vibrating tasks.
  - ➔ If despite you taking sensible precautions, you are not on top of the problem talk to your doctor about what else can be done.
- There are medications that can help the problem and may help you.



## WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Autoimmune Resource & Research Centre

Telephone: 02 49214095

email: [arcc@autoimmune.org.au](mailto:arcc@autoimmune.org.au)

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

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## Raynaud's phenomenon



What is  
Raynaud's  
phenomenon?

## What is Raynaud's phenomenon?

Raynaud's phenomenon is the name given to the temporary interruption of blood supply to the fingers or toes (occasionally the ears and nose), which occurs as a result of spasm causing the vessel to squeeze and get smaller. This reduces blood flow to many areas particularly those that have a lot of small blood vessels.

It is characterised by a series of changes in the colour of the skin. Typically the finger or toes initially become white as blood supply is lost, then blue or dusky purple, and finally pink as blood flow improves. The colour changes and spasm will eventually stop and return to normal. This can last from minutes to hours.

Episodes can also be associated with pain when a spasm occurs and the blood flow is restricted. Some people complain that pain and also heat occurs when blood flow is returned to the blood vessel.

The spasm is the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of an episode of Raynaud's and is most commonly triggered by cold and emotional upset, however, the use of some vibrating tools, and certain drugs (including caffeine and cigarettes) can also do this.

It is named after the French physician Maurice Raynaud who in 1862 was the first to describe the process.

## What causes Raynaud's phenomenon?

Around 5% of the population and up to 20% of women will experience an episode of Raynaud's. Raynaud's can be a stand-alone condition; it is also common in people with other autoimmune illnesses such as Lupus and Scleroderma. While these conditions are rare, they are important to identify because they are likely to need specific treatment.

Raynaud's can also occur in people that have occupations that use vibrating machinery such as jack hammers, chain saws and sanders.

keep warm

eat healthy

wear protective clothing

use first aid

Avoid cold & vibrating tasks

sun protection

keep calm

meditation

exercise & get fit

avoid emotional upsets

## What harm does it do?

In most cases harm is minimal. If episodes are severe, prolonged or frequent the ischaemia (lack of blood supply) will cause damage. Damage can come in the form of scarring, poor healing of minor cuts and abrasions, ulcers can form or even loss of tissue in severe cases. In rare instances gangrene can develop due to a lack of blood to the finger and toes.

## When should I see a doctor?

Anytime you are concerned about your Raynaud's episode you should see your doctor. It is especially important to do this if the attacks are becoming more frequent or severe or if cuts on the fingers are slow to heal, form ulcers or leave pitted scars.

It is a good idea for anyone with recurrent Raynaud's to have a check up to make sure there isn't an associated or underlying problem. This is quite a straightforward matter, and generally consists of a full medical history and physical examination.

Very likely, a chest x-ray and blood test will also be taken to check for other autoimmune illness related indicators.

## How can you treat it?

While in some cases treatment of the underlying condition with medications can "cure" the Raynaud's, in most instances the Raynaud's needs to be managed with medications and self-management strategies. The most important step is to prevent episodes by avoiding things that can trigger them.

Protecting your hands and feet from the cold and injury is the most important thing you can do to reduce the effects of Raynaud's phenomenon.