

# Raynaud's Syndrome Treatment Guidelines

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Raynaud's syndrome, also known as Raynaud's disease or Raynaud's phenomenon, is a condition that affects the blood vessels in the body, particularly those in the fingers and toes. It causes episodes of reduced blood flow to these areas, resulting in them turning white or blue and feeling cold and numb.

While there is no cure for Raynaud's syndrome, there are various treatment options available to help manage its symptoms and prevent complications.

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## Treatment options

The goals of treatment for Raynaud's syndrome are to reduce the attacks, make attacks less severe, and prevent tissue damage (Garrick, 2017):

- Reduce how many attacks you have.
- Make attacks less severe.
- Prevent tissue damage.

## Avoiding colds

For many individuals with Raynaud's phenomenon, maintaining warmth can effectively prevent attacks and manage symptoms. However, if this approach is inadequate, medications or sometimes surgical interventions may be necessary.

Secondary Raynaud's phenomenon is typically more severe and often demands more aggressive treatment. If you have this form, it is crucial to address any underlying conditions that may be present.

## Medications

While there are no medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for Raynaud's phenomenon, medications that have been approved for other conditions are routinely used to treat it. These include (Mayo Clinic, 2017):

- **Calcium channel blockers:** These medications relax and dilate small blood vessels in the hands and feet, aiding in the healing of sores on fingers and toes. Notable examples include nifedipine (Procardia), amlodipine (Norvasc), felodipine, and isradipine.
- **Vasodilators:** - These medications work by relaxing blood vessels. They encompass the high blood pressure drug losartan (Cozaar), the erectile dysfunction medication sildenafil (Viagra, Revatio), the antidepressant fluoxetine (Prozac), and a class of drugs known as prostaglandins.

## Surgery

Surgery or shots might be needed to treat severe Raynaud's (Mayo Clinic, 2017):

- **Nerve Surgery:** Nerves in the hands and feet regulate the dilation and constriction of blood vessels in the skin. Severing these nerves can halt these responses. In this procedure, a healthcare provider makes small incisions in the affected areas and removes tiny nerves around the blood vessels. If successful, this surgery may result in fewer and shorter attacks.
- **Chemical Injection:** Injections of numbing agents or onabotulinumtoxinA (Botox) can block nerves in the affected hands or feet. If symptoms persist or recur, some individuals may require multiple treatments.

# Lifestyle modifications

There are several lifestyle modifications that a person with Raynaud's can make to help manage their symptoms and reduce the frequency of attacks. These include:

- **Keeping warm:** Maintaining body warmth is crucial for individuals with Raynaud's. Wearing layers of clothing, including thick socks, gloves or mittens, and a hat can help keep the body temperature stable.
- **Avoiding triggers:** Identifying and avoiding triggers that cause attacks is essential. These may include exposure to cold temperatures, emotional stress, and smoking.
- **Eating a healthy diet:** A well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can help improve blood flow and maintain overall health.
- **Regular exercise can improve circulation and reduce stress**, which can help prevent Raynaud's attacks.
- **Managing stress:** Stress can trigger or worsen symptoms of Raynaud's. Engaging in relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga can help manage stress and reduce the frequency of attacks.
- **Quitting smoking:** Smoking constricts blood vessels, making it harder for blood to flow normally. Quitting smoking is essential for individuals with Raynaud's to improve their overall circulation and reduce the risk of complications.

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## References

Mayo Clinic. (2017). *Raynaud's disease - diagnosis and treatment*.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/raynauds-disease/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20363572>

Garrick, N. (2017, April 10). *Raynaud's phenomenon*. National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. <https://www.niams.nih.gov/health-topics/raynauds-phenomenon/diagnosis-treatment-and-steps-to-take>