

Hand Therapy

Cold Intolerance

Cold Intolerance – Cold intolerance is an uncomfortable reaction to changes in temperature. It is an unfortunate consequence following hand injuries or surgery. Cold intolerance is not the same as Raynaud's Syndrome, which may have an underlying medical cause, although the symptoms are generally the same.

Symptoms – You may experience pain, swelling, stiffness, numbness or altered colouration, e.g. white, red or purple, in your hand. These symptoms can extend beyond the site of the original injury or scar. They can occur whenever there is a change in temperature e.g. outside in cold weather or walking past the freezers in a supermarket.

Duration – Symptoms are often worse during the first year following injury or surgery especially in winter and then they gradually reduce. However, sometimes they remain for several years.

Treatment

- **Thermal gloves and clothing** – Use good quality thermal gloves as soon as the environmental temperature lowers. Try not to get cold in the first place. Keep your body warm in order to ensure your blood supply is not diverted away from your hands.
- **Heated gloves** – Several companies offer these products online. You could try specialist cycling / motorcycle suppliers.
- **Heat pads** – There are a large range available including reusable packs and these can be helpful for emergency warmth when outdoors.
- **Do not smoke** – in order to improve circulation.
- **Activity modification** – Try modifying outdoor activities such as gardening or golf. Spend less time outside or even avoid such activities in very cold weather. If your job involves working in cold environments, try to move into warmer areas regularly to ensure your hands do not stay cold for long periods at a time. Take regular breaks and use gloves.
- **Exercises** – Ensure you keep your joints mobile by exercising regularly. Avoid exercising when your hands are very cold or stiff. Warm them first e.g. in a warm shower or bowl of warm water. This should make the exercises more comfortable and, therefore, easier to do.

If your hands do get cold

Move indoors and try to warm your hands by massaging them, moving your fingers and arms or putting your hands under your armpits.

To contact us email: qvh.handtherapy@nhs.net

Alternatively phone: **01342 414072**

Information at www.qvh.nhs.uk - Our services/Therapies/Hand Therapy