

- Use warming, pungent foods and spices that stimulate circulation of energy and blood, moving energy upwards and outwards to the periphery of the body. These include spearmint (not the gum, but the actual leaves or in tea), rosemary, scallion, garlic and all onion family members (best when not cooked), cinnamon bark, cloves, fresh and dried ginger root, black pepper, all hot peppers, cayenne, mustard greens, horseradish, basil, and nutmeg. I find ginger tea is easy to do and helpful, or you might like to try this homemade blend offered by Ayurveda expert, Vasant Lad.
 - Boil for 5 minutes, 8 ounces of water with these herbs: 1/2 teaspoon dry ginger, 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon, and a pinch of ground cloves. Let cool enough to drink, stir, and enjoy.

There are more natural ways to alleviate Raynaud's; ask your holistic health counselor to assess your diet and lifestyle, and she will have more suggestions tailored just for you. Meanwhile, stay warm so you can enjoy the winter. And breathe!

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Natural Ways to Alleviate Raynaud's Phenomenon

Raynaud's Phenomenon (sometimes called Raynaud's Syndrome) is a condition in which poor circulation to the extremities results in discomfort, numbness, and the blanching of skin color, usually to the fingers and toes. It occurs in 25% to 30% of women, and less frequently in men.

There is no cure. Sometimes it is associated with other diseases such as lupus. Usually it does not result in permanent damage. The exact cause is unknown but the symptoms usually arise when there is exposure to cold, such as being in the cold out-of-doors, in an overly air-conditioned environment or by holding a cold object, such as an ice cold soft drink can, even on a hot day! Raynaud's may also be caused by stress. It can be triggered by some drugs, for example, beta blockers used to treat high blood pressure.

My episodes showed up when I had kids participating in spring track (it's freezing in April!), when stressed, and while waiting too long in a cold car for the ski bus to return to the school, etc. Life is full of opportunities, now that I think about it.

Preventive measures are encouraged to reduce episodes of Raynaud's Phenomenon. Some natural methods include the following:

- Wear warm clothing and cover up. Undershirts and pant liners made of cotton, silk or nylon that are worn right next to your skin work well. They trap your body heat but aren't too warm to wear indoors. Wear a hat outdoors because 60% of your body heat is lost through the head. Don't forget your gloves.
- Stop smoking and avoid caffeine. Nicotine constricts the arteries: caffeine can contribute to the problem.
- Learn stress management techniques. Dr. Andrew Weil suggests a Relaxing Breath technique. Hold your tongue just behind the top of your upper front teeth. Breathe in through your nose for a count of 4, hold for a count of 7, and exhale through the mouth, making a whooshing sound for a count of 8. To begin, just do this 4 times a session. This exercise is good to learn, whether you suffer from Raynaud's or not! And it can be done anywhere that you don't mind making the whooshing sound!