Raynaud’s Disease

Overview
Raynaud’s disease is an illness that typically affects a person’s fingers and toes, but can also affect other parts of the body, for instance ears, the tip of the nose, and lips. In this condition, small blood vessels spasm causing decreased blood flow to the extremities. Narrowing of these vessels can be brought on by cold temperature or emotional stress.

There are two main types of Raynaud’s: Primary and Secondary. Primary Raynaud’s disease is the most common and is not associated with an underlying disease or medical disorder. On the other hand Secondary Raynaud’s disease is associated with a disease or medical condition. Known medical conditions that are linked to Raynaud’s are the following:

- Scleroderma
- Lupus
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Sjogren’s syndrome
- Diseases of the arteries such as atherosclerosis.

Symptoms
The following is a list of signs and symptoms associated with Raynaud’s disease:
- cold fingers and/or toes
- progressive color changes of the skin
- might experience a tingling or stinging pain when thawing the affecting area

At the onset of a Raynaud’s attack, the involved area will turn white. Then it begins to appear blue. During this stage the area will feel cold and numb due to the decreased circulation. As the blood flow improves, the area will turn red causing a throbbing or tingling sensation.
Not all people with Raynaud’s disease follow this sequence of color changes.

Causes
Physicians do not fully understand the cause of Raynaud disease, but they do know that blood vessels of the affected areas are aggravated by cold temperature and stress.

Risk Factors
Raynaud’s affects all ages and genders, but women are at the greatest risk. It affects 90% more women than men. Other risk factors associated with primary Raynaud’s disease are the following:

- Ages between 15-30
- Living in colder climates
- Family history (1/3 of people with Raynaud’s disease have a parent, sibling, or child with this disorder)

Associated diseases, such as scleroderma and lupus are a risk factor for secondary Raynaud’s disease. Also certain occupations involving repetitive
trauma can be a risk factor for secondary Raynaud’s. Finally
different substances can lead to secondary Raynaud’s such as
smoking and certain medications that compromise blood vessels.

Complications

Depending on the severity of the Raynaud’s
disease, blood flow can be
permanently weakened which
could lead to deformities of the
affected areas. Skin ulcers and
dead tissue could also be
complications of Raynaud’s
disease. Skin ulcers usually form
when an artery of the affect area
becomes completely occluded.
In severe cases a doctor might
have to amputate the affected
area if the ulcer or dead tissue
goes untreated.

Tests and diagnosis

When diagnosing
Raynaud’s the doctor might
implement a test called nail fold
capillaroscopy. Basically the
doctor examines the capillaries
near the nail fold. If the vessels
are deformed this could suggest
the person has Raynaud’s
disease. This test does not
always detect secondary
Raynaud’s. If a physician
believes the patient has
secondary Raynaud’s then
blood test will be used to
determine an underlying
problem.

Treatment

Preventive measures are the
best treatment for Raynaud’s.
People can wear layers of
clothing including gloves and
thick socks to keep extremities
warm. If Raynaud’s disease is
more severe the person might
take medication to control the
disorder.

Helpful Tips

Lifestyle changes can help
reduce Raynaud’s attacks. The
following is a list of lifestyle
changes needed to manage this
disorder:

• Exercise is a great way
to increase circulation in
the body and decrease
the number of Raynaud’s
attacks.
• Stay away from caffeine.
It causes blood vessels
to decrease or narrow
and may lead to more
Raynaud’s episodes.
• Smoking causes body
temperature to decrease
by narrowing blood
vessels. Secondhand
smoking can also flare-
up Raynaud’s.
• Since stress can spark
Raynaud’s attacks try to
avert stressful situations.
• While working avoid
devices that vibrate the
hand, such as a
jackhammer.
• Hands and Feet
maintenance:
1. Keep nails clipped to
prevent injuries to
toes and fingers.
2. Walking barefooted is
not recommended.
3. Avoid wearing
anything that could
compress blood
vessels in hands and
feet, such as a
wristband and
stockings with tight
bands.

References

• www.mayoclinic.com
• http://www.raynauds.org

Other News:

**If you have any suggestions for
newsletter topics, please contact
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