

Violaceous, Sore, Cold Toes

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A 44-year-old female presents with violaceous, sore and cold toes. These symptoms began in early November.

What is your diagnosis?

- Pernio
- Raynaud's phenomenon
- Polycythemia vera
- Antiphospholipid syndrome
- Erythromelalgia

Answer

Pernio (**answer a**) or chilblains is a recurrent, localized, violaceous-to-erythematous soreness caused by exposure to cold. There is often some swelling, and erosions and ulcerations can sometimes occur. Those with an impaired peripheral circulation are more commonly affected as are those living in damp climates. This condition is also associated with cryoglobulinemia and lupus erythematosus.

Patients are often unaware of this mild cold injury until later when burning, itching and colour changes occur. Toes are often cold to palpation. This condition can occur repeatedly with falling temperatures, and disappears in the summer.



Figure 1: Violaceous, Sore, Cold Toes

Affected areas should be kept warm (e.g., wool socks at night, no bare-foot walking at home) and smoking should be discouraged. Various oral medications have been tried with some benefit, including: nifedipine, pentoxifylline and nicotinamide.

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