

13. Toes that turn patriotic colors



What it means: In cold weather, Raynaud's disease (or Raynaud's phenomenon) causes the extremities to first go white, then turn blue, and finally appear red before returning to a natural hue. For reasons not well understood, the blood vessels in these areas vasospasm, or overreact, causing the tricolor show.

More clues: Other commonly affected areas include the fingers, nose, lips, and ear lobes. They also feel cool to the touch and go numb. Women and those who live in colder climates get Raynaud's more often. It typically shows up before age 25 or after 40. Stress can trigger Raynaud's attacks, too.

What to do: See a doctor for further evaluation. Raynaud's is usually uncomfortable but not dangerous. However, in a minority of people, Raynaud's is a sign of an underlying autoimmune disease that may benefit from treatment. All people suffering from Raynaud's can benefit by learning basic non-drug techniques to keep the extremities warm, and to reverse an attack of vasospasm. In some cases the doctor may recommend a medication that can widen blood vessels, which reduces the severity of attacks.