If chilblains have developed

1. Don’t scratch them. Soothing lotions such as calamine may ease the discomfort.

2. If the skin is broken, apply an antiseptic dressing and contact the podiatry department.

   If you require further advice please contact the podiatry department at your local clinic.

Comments, concerns or complaints?
If you have any comments, concerns or complaints and would like to speak to somebody about them please telephone: 01773 525119

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Chilblains

What is a chilblain?
A chilblain is a condition which results from an extreme reaction of the blood vessels on exposure to the cold.

Who gets them and why?
The elderly and very young are most vulnerable. Chilblains usually appear on the extremities - fingers, toes and ears.

On exposure to cold temperatures, blood vessels in the skin constrict in an attempt to conserve heat. In some instances the area can become pale, or blue and on returning to the warm blood vessels dilate causing swelling and inflammation, leaving areas of skin red, itchy, burning and very tender to touch. An infection may occur if there is a break in the skin.

How to prevent them

1. Keep Warm
Keep the hands and feet warm - wear several layers of thin loose clothing rather than one thick layer, this helps to trap insulating air between the layers. Keep your legs warm with trousers, woolly tights or long thermal socks.

2. Rewarming
If your hands and feet get very cold, do not apply sudden heat to them, i.e. don't place hands on the radiator or in front of a fire. Allow them to warm slowly, as too much heat too quickly can cause damage and considerable pain. Keep your fingers and toes moving to encourage the circulation.

3. Exercise
Exercise will help to encourage the circulation - try to keep up a routine of gentle exercises in order to increase the blood supply to the tissues, e.g. point your toes, rotate your feet, wiggle your toes.

4. Footwear
Wearing fleecy-lined shoes or boots, sheepskin or a synthetic lining to a leather shoe, and wearing slippers which cover your ankles can help retain warmth. Remember to make sure that they are not too tight fitting.