

IN THE SHADOW OF HOGAN'S MOUNTAIN

By Dr. Warren Hollar
whollar@charter.net

Cold Feet

Who has the biggest issue? Men or Women?

This age-old dilemma confronted by many couples creates many occasions for conversation especially during the winter months. In bed, things get even worse. One spouse is repeatedly craving to use the other as a human heating pad. As the spouse tries to place their feet into the warmth of the mate's legs or back or whatever bit of warm flesh that is nearest, the other spouse winces and shifts away. Usually an exclamation precedes this such as "Get them off me!" or maybe something a little stronger depending on the outside temperature.

So, what do the medical experts say about who has the colder feet. Well, guys I hate to tell you this, but in most cases, the woman has colder feet. "The nerves that control blood flow to the hands and feet are more sensitive in women than in men," per most vascular surgeons. When the temperature drops, a woman's vessels constrict more, warming blood flow slows, and their extremities feel cold. Women also usually have lower blood pressure than men.

"When they're cold or stressed and their blood pressure drops, blood is redirected to the heart and away from the hands and feet," according to Mark Eskandari, M.D., a vascular surgeon at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. Statistics on Wikipedia say women are up to nine times more likely to suffer from cold hands and feet than men. Foot expert Margaret Dabbs says another reason women's feet get colder than

men's is because women's skin on their feet is thinner and has less subcutaneous fat than men's. Older women in the 40-plus age range have the greatest issue with thinning skin.

In winter, some people's hands and feet are always cold. The reason this happens is basically temperatures. When the thermometer level drops, your body tries to keep your core warm, where all your vital organs are. So, the blood vessels in your extremities constrict and limit circulation to these parts of your body. The result is cold-to-the-touch fingers, hands, toes, feet, nose, and ears. So, what is a woman to do? The woodstoves of an earlier time were the cure for cold feet and hands. Few homes are heated with wood today. Cold feet and hands during the night were often cured with use of wool socks, hot-water bottles, and multiple quilts on the beds.

Let's first look at what medical literature lists as the reasons for cold extremities. Disclaimer - Visiting a medical doctor is the best way to determine if the readers have one of the maladies listed below.

* Anemia - Women are more prone since they hold less iron in the body than men. Since iron is needed to transport oxygen around the blood, a lack will hamper blood flow per the National Institutes of Health. Doctors usually recommend supplements including iron, folic acid, vitamin C, and/or vitamin B12.

* Raynaud's disease - Constriction of vessels in extremities

thus limiting circulation. More common in women than men and in residents of northern areas.

* Peripheral arterial disease - The Cleveland Clinic indicates that cold feet and redness or pain in the feet and toes are symptoms.

* Hyperhidrosis - Cedars-Sinai doctors say excessive sweating is over-activity of the nervous system resulting in less blood flow to the feet, making them cold in addition to wet.

* Diabetic nerve damage - Peripheral neuropathy is caused in people with chronic diabetes resulting in tingling, burning, pain, and coldness in the feet, legs, and hands per the Diabetes Monitor.

* Smoking - Circulation issues caused by smoking can result in cold feet.

* Hormones - WebMD explains that hormones regulate the amount of iron in the thyroid. Low iron results in lower body temperatures. Make sure you do not have hypothyroidism.

* Nutrition - Poor diet lacking in vitamins and minerals such as B12 and folate impact blood flow.

* Mood can influence our temperature - People who are lonely or socially excluded feel the cold more.

Use of medicines such as blood thinners.

A review of blogs on the topic of cold feet have provided some interesting solutions to the problem. Some are medically proven and some or simply old wives' tales or personal beliefs. In any case, here is a listing of several potential solutions to cold feet and hands.

* Wear the right shoes - Tight shoes can cut off circulation and cause feet to feel cold.

* Use some type of heating device for your feet in bed-heating pad, electric socks, electric blanket, etc. May need some negotiation with spouse.

* Exercise - Proper exercise improves circulation to extremities.

* Diet - Eat more Vitamin K to improve circulation. Ginger tea is good for poor circulation.

* Use a foot spa - Warms feet slowly and hydrates from the outside.

* Drink plenty of water - When you are dehydrated, your hands and feet get colder. Dry skin does not retain heat as well as moisturized skin.

* Wear natural socks

- Cheap, man-made fibers have few air pockets to retain natural body heat. Choose wool or cotton socks with more textured fibers. Make sure the elastic band is not too tight around legs.

* Changing socks after getting home. Socks naturally get damp from perspiration after being in shoes all day.

* Cayenne pepper - Some older people swear that rubbing liberally between toes warms feet.

* Wear a hat - Much heat is lost through the head. Outward bound experts say hats help with keeping feet warm. Your brain requires much oxygen. A brain with lower temperature will force constriction of capillaries in less important part such as toes.

* Wiggle your fingers and toes - Wiggle early and often. * Extremely skinny people have more problems with cold feet - Put on a few pounds. Obese people just compound the issue of cold feet by gaining weight.

Information for this column came from a review of literature from websites from organizations such as Wikipedia, the National Institute of Health, the Cleveland Clinic, Cedars-Sinai Hospitals, Diabetes Monitor, and WebMD. Blogs on the topic were also reviewed. Hopefully, the information will help you cope with your cold feet and bring about more civil conversations with your spouse about the subject.

Alexander Co. Democrats to hold annual FDR Dinner Jan. 30

The Alexander County Democratic Party (ACDP) will hold their Annual FDR Dinner on Monday, January 30, at 6:00 p.m. at Captain's Galley in Stony Point. Everyone is invited to attend and honor the legacy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the annual dinner. Tickets are \$15 each.

Everyone is encouraged to attend and enjoy a delicious meal, fun, and fellowship. For ticket information, contact Larry Price, Chairman, at 828-381-5965. Take-outs will be available after 7 p.m. Inclement weather date will be February 6.

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