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Cold intolerance

Cold intolerance is an abnormal sensitivity to a cold environment or cold temperatures.

Considerations

Cold intolerance can be a symptom of a problem with metabolism.

Some people (often thin older women) do not tolerate cold temperatures because they have very little body fat to help keep them warm.

Causes

Some causes of cold intolerance are:

- Anemia
- Anorexia nervosa
- Blood vessel problems, such as Raynaud phenomenon
- Chronic severe illness
- General poor health
- Problem with the hypothalamus, (a part of the brain that controls body temperature)
- Underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism)

Home Care

Follow the recommended therapy for treating the cause of the problem.

When to Contact a Medical Professional

Contact your health care provider if you have long-term or extreme intolerance to cold.

What to Expect at Your Office Visit

Your provider will take a medical history and perform a physical examination.

Your provider's questions may include the following topics.

Time pattern:

- Have you always been intolerant of cold?
- Has this developed recently?
- Has it been getting worse?
- Do you often feel cold when other people do not complain of being cold?

Medical history:

- What is your diet like?
- How is your general health?
- What are your height and weight?
- What other symptoms do you have?

Tests that may be performed include:

- Complete blood count (CBC)
- Serum TSH
- Thyroid hormone levels (T3, T4)

If your provider diagnoses cold intolerance, you may want to include the diagnosis in your personal medical record.

Alternative Names

Sensitivity to the cold; Intolerance to cold

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