

# Healtheorium®

By Mimi Borger

## ***“Keep colds away with warm feet”***

It seems that the toe bone is connected to the head bone – whenever my feet are cold, my entire self feels cold! When I was a kid, my family lived near Canada, so, in the winter when we went outside to play, everything about us was layered -- underwear, long underwear, pants, snow pants, shirt, sweater, scarf wrapped over chest and around to back, coat, hat, hood, scarf wrapped around hood and face. Then came wool socks, shoes, wool socks over shoes, boots with grey fuzzy lining, fur-lined gloves and knitted mittens to top. As big balls of wool and flannel, we tumbled and dug and played for hours in the snow while temperatures plunged and ice formed on our eyelashes and under our noses. Laughing and stomping into the basement at the end of the day, we peeled off layers of icy clothing, slapping snow niblets from our gloves, hearing them sizzle and steam on the hot furnace pipes. Running upstairs with icicle cold feet, Mom would admonish, “Hurry, change into dry clothes, or *you’ll catch your death of cold!*” We’d wrap cold toes in fresh warm socks and slippers, and while the feeling and normal color returned to our frozen bodies, we sipped warm drinks – soup, cider, hot chocolate or tea. Ahhhhhh, now that was living!

Almost fifty years later, in 2005, British Researchers at Cardiff University in England confirmed what my mother said – there indeed seems a correlation between chilling and the development of cold symptoms. The body responds to cold by trying to protect core temperature. Chilling the feet causes blood vessel constriction in the nose and blood flow is reduced to the extremities cutting circulation, leaving feet sometimes painfully cold. Shivering is involuntary muscle tensing that generates heat, so even mild activity like wiggling or rolling the toes can help warm the entire body.

Now, living in the high desert, as winter breathes down my back and tries to crawl into my loafers, I stave off the cold, making sure my feet are warm and dry. At night, a few blasts of warm air from a blow dryer or the swipe of a hot iron removes the chill from my bed sheets while a blanket warmed for a few minutes in the clothes dryer makes an inviting nest. The family dog or cat, or a hot water bottle filled with steaming water and wrapped in a towel can stay toasty for hours at the foot of my bed, and of course a warm bath or shower just before retiring is the ultimate treat. When my feet are cold (but not frost bit or freezing) I enjoy soaking them in a pan of warm water, perhaps with a small amount of mustard powder or Epsom salts or I wrap them in warm damp cloth tucked in a heating pad or pressed against a grain or herb-filled cloth bag, micro-waved to perfection. Of course, stores now offer a wide variety of foot warmers -- wool socks, thermal “hunter’s” socks, weird little boot inserts that heat up, electric sock warmers, toe socks, lined slippers and pajamas with feet.

In winter, nature provides body-warming foods that increase circulation and provide vitamins (especially A and C) that protect and build my immune system. Available in

abundance are cranberries, oranges, apricots, cherries and plums. Warm cereals such as oatmeal, or at lunch or dinner, side dishes made from grains or potatoes, and main dishes of hearty meat stews or soups along with darker vegetables such as squash, yams, dandelion, green broccoli, and bright orange carrots grace our dinner table. Herbs and spices improve flavor and circulation increasing body heat and can be found in both food and topical creams – cayenne cumin, cinnamon, garlic, horseradish, mustard, peppercorn, and ginger.

So, as winter bears down upon us, whenever available enjoy the sun and warmth, stay hydrated -- drink plenty fluids as cold blunts the thirst mechanism – and remember: be kind and take care of the feet of yourself and others around you – especially the young, elderly, or those who with Arthritis, Diabetes, Muscular Dystrophy, MS or illnesses and situations that effect circulation.

Enjoy the inclement weather from within!

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