

Brain-damaged children often have cold feet

October 19 2009

Many wheelchair-using children with neurological disorders have much colder hands and feet than other children, and most receive no special help even though they have had these problems for a long time, is revealed in a thesis from the Sahlgrenska Academy at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

"These [children](#) have a disorder that can make it difficult to express how they feel, but it must be unpleasant to have cold hands and feet," says physiotherapist Lena Svedberg, author of the thesis. "I find it surprising that the matter hasn't been given more attention."

The thesis shows that skin temperature in brain-damaged preschool children in wheelchairs was several degrees lower than in children without neurological disorders. The temperature of their feet was three degrees lower and their hands two degrees lower than children without brain damage. The reason for their cold extremities may be that the [brain damage](#) affects the part of the nervous system that is not controlled by the will and which, among other things, regulates blood circulation, digestion and sleep.

"This hypothesis is supported by a study in the thesis that shows that children with [cerebral palsy](#) who had cold hands and feet also had problems with constipation, sleeping disorders, pain and impaired well-being," says Svedberg.

There is currently no established treatment for cold hands and feet, but a small pilot study - also part of the thesis - demonstrates that acupuncture

might be effective.

"[Acupuncture](#) activates the nerve fibres that lead inwards and can affect activity in the autonomic nervous system," says Svedberg. "We could see that treatment raised skin temperature in some children with neurological disorders, but it is a very small study and more research is needed."

Parents are often anxious when children have cold hands and feet indoors, but the long-term effects on children are unknown.

"However, there are studies that suggest that balance reactions can be affected if the soles of the feet are cold," explains Svedberg.

Source: University of Gothenburg ([news](#) : [web](#))

Citation: Brain-damaged children often have cold feet (2009, October 19) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-10-brain-damaged-children-cold-feet.html>

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