

Women's hands really are colder than men's, scientists confirm

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The front and back of a human right hand. Credit: Wikipedia.

Ladies, raise a gloved hand if your hands feel as frozen as Elsa's, especially in the winter.

Women's hands generally are colder than men's, and the old saying "cold hands, warm heart" may go a long way to explaining why.

Using [thermal images](#), University of Utah researchers compared the hands of men and women, and found that women's hands typically run 2.8 degrees Fahrenheit colder than men's.

Exposure to cold - whether it comes from taking a cold shower or a wintry walk outside - causes blood vessels in the hands and feet to contract, reducing [blood flow](#) there as the body seeks to protect the heart and other vital organs.

While this happens in men and women, the cold response is much quicker for women.

It's still a bit of a mystery why, but scientists suggest that differences in body size, composition and hormones are the culprits.

Women have more body fat and less muscle than men. The fat protects the [vital organs](#), including the uterus, but it also restricts blood flow to the extremities.

Women also tend to lose heat faster from their skin because they're generally smaller than men.

That explains why so many women are shivering in office cubicles next to their male co-workers wearing short sleeves.

For most [women](#), having [cold hands](#), though uncomfortable, isn't cause for concern - unless it is a symptom of a medical condition known as Raynaud's.

Raynaud's disease causes fingers and toes to feel numb and cold in response to chilly temperatures or stress, according to the Mayo Clinic. The condition causes small blood vessels that carry blood to the extremities to spasm and severely constrict, affecting blood flow. This can lead to tissue damage.

Women are five times more likely than men to have Raynaud's. Symptoms include: icy fingers or toes, skin color turning white or blue with exposure to cold or stress, and red with stinging pain after warming up.

There are two types of Raynaud's - primary and secondary. The secondary type is caused by an underlying condition and is less common. The primary type is linked to family history.

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