

## Dry Skin Care

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Dry skin is the result of dehydration of the skin. Healthy skin acts as a barrier that holds in moisture and protects against common irritants and hazards in the environment. Sometimes, however, the top layer of skin is unable to hold moisture. It dries and cracks, upsetting the natural protective barrier. As we age, the rate of skin cell turnover slows, our skin becomes thinner and our body doesn't transport nutrients as efficiently. All of these can lead to dry skin. The dry environment we experience in winter, both outdoors and in our heated homes, can also create dry skin problems.

You can alleviate dry skin with proper cleansing, moisturizing, nutrition and fluid intake.

### Cleansing:

Common soaps and cleansers may be harsh. They often remove the skin's protective layers and upset the pH balance, causing drying and irritation. Choose a mild, non-fragrant bar soap or liquid cleanser, such as:

- Oilatum
- Cetaphil
- Dove unscented
- Lever 2000
- Aveeno Oatmeal bar
- Eucerin

Avoid scrubbing your skin with wash cloths, brushes or sponges which can irritate the skin.

### Moisturizing:

A simple way to moisturize the skin is to wet it by bathing or showering, then use a moisturizer or ointment preparation to trap the moisture in the skin before it dries.

Ask your Family Dermatology doctor to recommend a non-irritating, gentle moisturizer. A good moisturizer will be long-lasting and fragrance-free. It will make your skin soft and smooth without causing irritation. Your doctor may also prescribe a preparation with moisturizers and steroid creams.

In some cases, dry skin may lead to darkened areas on the skin. This may be resolved when the dry skin is addressed, but in some cases additional medications may be needed to clear up the dark spots.

### Preventing dry skin:

- Make the use of mild soap or cleanser and a moisturizer part of your daily regimen.
- For bathing, use a mild, gentle soap such as Dove or Lux. In the winter, reduce the frequency of hot baths and showers.
- Pat your skin partially dry immediately after you bathe or shower. Apply the recommended moisturizer while your skin is still damp.
- Avoid swimming, which can aggravate dry skin.
- Keep the temperature in your home cool. If the air is dry, use a humidifier to increase the moisture in the air.
- Remove environmental allergens such as dust and pet hair from your home.
- For laundering clothes, choose a mild detergent and put the clothes through a second rinse cycle.
- Wear cotton clothing. Avoid wool which is scratchy and can aggravate dry, itchy skin.
- Avoid frequent hand washing, harsh detergents/soaps, perfumes and insecticides.

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