

Care of Dry Skin

After the teenage years, your skin gradually becomes drier. You can't change this process, but there are simple rules and daily routines you can follow to prevent and treat the irritating aspects of dry skin. In general, your skin will tend to be drier in winter months than in summer. Your skin will be drier in low-humidity climates such as Arizona than in high-humidity climates such as Florida.

Guidelines for dry-skin care

To prevent dry skin from becoming itchy and irritated, the following information may be helpful:

- *Bathe briefly* – Keep baths and showers brief (no more than 10 minutes)
- *Keep it cooler* – Always bathe or shower in warm (not hot) water. Water should be about 90 degrees Fahrenheit. Avoid hot water as it dries the skin.
- *Limit the lather* – Soap can be drying to the skin, so use a mild, gentle cleanser. As a rule, use soap only for strategic areas (face, underarms, genital area, hands and feet).
- *Pat, but don't rub* – Do not rub your skin dry after bathing. Instead, brush excess water off with your hands, and then pat your skin dry with a towel.
- *Moisturize immediately* – Apply lotion/cream right after bathing while your skin is still moist. This will make bathing a moisturizing, rather than a drying, procedure for your skin. When you let your skin become completely dry after bathing, some of the skin's natural moisture is lost through evaporation. Apply lotion/cream throughout the day as needed.
- *Fluids are fine* – Drink plenty of non-caffeinated beverages each day to help keep all your body's tissues, including the skin, well hydrated.
- *Sharpen up on shaving* – To minimize the drying effects of shaving, make sure you use a lubricating agent before you start, change blades often and shave in the direction that the hair grows.

Moisturizing is the key

For mild cases of dry skin, using a moisturizing lotion or cream is usually the best way to prevent or treat dry skin. You will find a large selection of moisturizing products available. A sampling of moisturizing lotions/creams include: CeraVe, Cetaphil, Vanicream, Neurogena, Curel, Eucerin, Lubriderm, Aquaphor, and Vaseline Intensive Care. Choose a moisturizer you like and use it regularly.

When dry skin worsens

In some people, areas of seriously dry skin can lead to a condition called dermatitis. Dermatitis refers to an inflammation of the skin. When dermatitis is present, your physician may prescribe a corticosteroid cream. Apply the corticosteroid cream/ointment as prescribed to the affected areas. Then, cover the entire skin surface with a moisturizing lotion/cream. Discontinue the corticosteroid when the dermatitis clears up, but continue using the moisturizing lotion/cream.

Important: After applying a corticosteroid to your skin, always wash your hands. Corticosteroids that remain on your hands may enter your eyes if you rub them.

Conclusion

Keeping your skin well moisturized should improve dry skin. If your skin worsens despite using the self-care measures above, contact your physician.