

Dry Skin (Xerosis)

Dry skin is a common problem. Your skin needs moisture to stay smooth and supple, and retaining moisture is especially difficult in winter. Central heating at home and other buildings is very drying to the skin.

Simple daily routines, such as bathing and towel drying, may actually remove moisture from the skin. Modifying your bathing routine will help preserve your skin's moisture. Bathing provides the skin with moisture temporarily, but it removes the skin's oily lipid layer and in the long run causes more moisture loss than gain.

The wrong moisturizing lotion can have the same effect. Generally, water-based lotions (Lubriderm, Keri lotion, others) are best cosmetically but oil-based creams are more effective in trapping moisture.

Instructions:

1. Each day when you take your bath or shower, try to use lukewarm water. Hot water dries out the skin. Try to limit your time to fifteen minutes or less in the bath or shower. Bathing should be done no more than once a day. If you bathe too frequently you will remove the natural oils from the skin causing dryness.
2. Avoid using harsh soaps that dry the skin. Recommended soaps are Dove, Olay and Basis. Even better than soap are skin cleansers such as Cetaphil Lotion, Cetaphil Restoraderm, and Cerave.
3. Deodorant soaps are often very harsh and drying. If you need them, limit their use to areas that develop an odor such as the armpits, genital area, and feet.
4. Avoid vigorous use of a washcloth in cleansing. When toweling dry, do not rub the skin. Blot or pat dry so there is still some moisture left on the skin.
5. Next apply a moisturizer to the skin. The best time to do this is immediately after a bath or shower so that the moisturizer holds in the moisture from the shower. Choose either Cetaphil cream, Moisturel cream or Cerave cream. If you have severely dry skin, apply an oil to the still moist skin such as Neutrogena light sesame oil, Hermal body oil, Alpha-Keri oil or Robathol, then apply a moisturizer and also apply the moisturizer at bedtime.
6. All areas that are exposed to the sun, such as the face, ears, hands, and back of the neck should have a moisturizer containing sun block or a sunscreen of SPF 15 or greater applied daily.
7. For laundry, use "All-free", "Tide-free" or "Dreft" detergents. Avoid using fabric softeners, especially in the dryer. Keep irritating fabrics away from your skin. Don't wear clothing made of wool or other "scratchy" fabrics. Use cotton percale sheets on your bed.
8. Use a humidifier in your home during the central heating season. If sweating causes itching, modify your activity and surroundings to minimize sweating. Work and sleep in a fairly constant temperature (68-75°F) and humidity (45-55%). Remember to keep drinking plenty of water and other liquids to keep your skin moist from the inside, too.