

Dry Skin

WHAT CAUSES DRY SKIN? Dry skin is a problem for many people, especially in cool weather when the air is dry. Dry air causes the skin to lose moisture resulting in chapping and cracking. These chapped, cracked areas may become irritated and itchy. Dry skin can sometimes form round patches that may resemble ringworm.

SKIN LUBRICATION: Treatment is intended to restore moisture to your skin. Water will briefly moisturize your skin, but the moisture is soon lost by evaporation. Lotions, creams, and ointments provide an oil coating that prevents water evaporation. We strongly urge that you use moisturizers starting in the fall when we turn our heat on until the springtime when we turn our heat off. For most people in the winter months are the most critical times of the year.

Any lubricant is best applied after your skin has been wet, so it may trap and hold moisture. We recommend any of the following: Eucerin, Aquaphor, Lubriderm, Moisturel, Cetaphil, Keri, or Vaseline Intensive Care. Please avoid fragrances.

Bath oils are also an effective way of preventing skin moisture loss. You may apply bath oil to your lightly dried skin after bathing or add it directly to your bath water (CAUTION: The tub may become slippery!). When applying bath oil directly to your skin, pour a small amount into your hands and spread it onto your slightly damp skin immediately after toweling. To avoid feeling greasy, only use a little. Generally a teaspoonful is enough for the entire body. If you prefer to use bath oil in the tub, add about a tablespoon to the bath water, and soak for 10-20 minutes. Do not use soap-you will get clean by soaking in the oil-water combination. Afterward, pat yourself dry with a towel; enough bath oil will remain on your skin to prevent moisture loss. Mineral oil should not be added to the bath, since it does not mix with water as the commercial bath oils do. If you do not have time for a bath or shower, use a plant mister to dampen the skin before the lubricant.

TREATING DRY SKIN: When dry skin has developed into a rash that itches, a cortisone cream or ointment usually brings quick relief. Cortisone is applied to the rash and massaged in well. Best times for application are usually at bedtime, after bathing, and one to two other times throughout the day. As the rash improves, the cortisone is used less often. If the skin rash is severe oral medication may be required.

SOAP: Soap removes the natural oils produced and needed by the skin. In order to minimize the use of soap, only apply it to the axillary and groin areas a warm water rinse and gentle rub with a wash cloth should suffice elsewhere. Some soaps that we recommend include Dove (unscented), Oil of Olay, Lever 2000, Neutrogena, Basis, Purpose, Aveeno, and Cetaphil (non-soap cleanser).

LONG-TERM CONTROL: Dry skin is usually a long-term problem that recurs often, especially in winter. If you notice your skin becoming dry, resume your prescribed lubricating. If an itchy dry-skin rash returns, use both the lubricating lotion and the prescription cortisone cream or ointment.

Dry Skin Do's and Don'ts

- Do not take hot showers or baths.
- Do not take long showers or baths.
- Do not put bath oil in the tub while it's filling.
- Do not towel dry vigorously.
- Do not leave the bathroom without applying moisturizer.
- Do not wash with a "pure" or granular soap.
- Do not use astringents or alcohol based products.
- Do not use too many creams or ointments
- Do not "air dry" after bathing or swimming.
- Do not forget to shower after swimming.
- Do bathe or shower in warm water.
- Do limit bathing time to 5 minutes per day.
- Do add bath oil after your skin has soaked up some water.
- Do pat yourself dry after bathing.
- Do put on moisturizer right after bathing. Use lotion after washing your hands.
- Do use a soap with moisturizer or one for sensitive skin.
- Do limit your skin cream collection to one or two products.
- Do towel dry when you get out of the bath or pool.
- Do rinse off chlorine and salt water.
- Do humidify your home in the winter or year-round if you live in a dry climate.