

General Guidelines to Care for Your Dry Skin

Dry skin occurs when the top layer of the skin becomes dehydrated. This often happens during the winter months, when the humidity is low and the air is dry. Older adults may have dry skin all year, especially on the lower legs. Itching often accompanies dry skin. Treatment involves rehydrating the skin and adding moisture to the environment. This fact card describes general steps to care for dry skin.

If you are having radiation, you will be given a booklet on skin care. It will tell you how to care for your skin in that area. If you have dry skin on other parts of your body, this booklet may be helpful. Be sure to ask your radiation nurse before you do any of the things listed here.

Suggestions to Relieve Dry Skin

- Keep the air in your home moist by lowering the heat. Ask your doctor or nurse about other things that can help humidify the air.
- Take a short bath or shower with warm or cool water every other day. If you must shower daily, take a brief shower as instructed by your doctor or nurse. Do not soak in a tub for a long time.
- Some soaps may be harsh on your skin. Use a gentle soap with moisturizers. Try
 - Basis[®]
 - Caress[®]
 - Cetaphil[®]
 - Dove[®]
 - Eucerin[®] or
 - A soap that your doctor or nurse recommends
- Apply a moisturizer right after the shower or bath, while your skin is still damp. Try
 - Aquaphor[®]
 - Caress[®]
 - Cetaphil[®]
 - Eucerin cream
 - Lubriderm[®], or
 - Vaseline[®] petroleum jelly
- Avoid friction on your skin. Do not rub it dry; pat it with a towel.
- Reapply your moisturizer at bedtime.
- Protect exposed skin from winter weather: wear hats and gloves while outdoors.
- Avoid direct contact with fabrics such as wool or angora. These may irritate your skin. Wear clothing made of 100% cotton and then layer it with woolen clothes.
- Wear a moisturizer with sunscreen all the year.
- To prevent your lips from drying and cracking, protect them with a fragrance-free lip balm that has no vitamins. Reapply it as needed.
- Treat dry skin on your hands and feet at bedtime with Vaseline or the recommended moisturizer. Cover them with cotton gloves or socks.

- Wear rubber gloves to avoid direct contact with harsh household cleansers. Reapply hand cream throughout the day.
- Use a mild laundry detergent such as
 - All® Free
 - Cheer® Free
 - Dreft®, or
 - Tide® Free
- Although your skin may feel itchy, avoid scratching, as this only worsens the condition. If you have severe itching, speak with your doctor or nurse.

Please contact your doctor or nurse at the numbers below if you have any questions about your skin care.

Doctor: _____ Telephone: _____

Nurse: _____ Telephone: _____

