



Dry Skin Care

What causes dry skin?

Dry skin is common and results from inadequate moisture in the outer skin layers. Water enters the skin from the body and escapes into the air by evaporation. Dry skin usually results from excessive evaporation from the skin surface and is due to two major environmental factors:

1. Normally, oil glands in the skin deposit oil on the skin surface that with body heat, spreads to form a thin film that retards water evaporation. Exposure to solvents, soaps, disinfectants, or excessive bathing may remove or reduce this film. Damage to this oil barrier results in increased water loss.
2. Water evaporates from the skin more rapidly with lower relative humidity (a ratio of the amount of water the air holds to the amount it could hold at that temperature). During the winter months we spend most of our time indoors in heated air, which has a low relative humidity, which leads to dry skin.

A tendency for dry skin may run in families. Also, as people age, the number of oil glands gradually diminishes leading to a less effective barrier against dry skin. Itching is the main symptom of dry skin and may be severe. Usually we see rough, dry, scaly skin that has been scratched. Most commonly, the lower legs and ankles are involved, but the entire skin surface may be dry.

How can I better manage dry skin?

1. Use soap only once every day or every other day, even if you take a bath more than once a day. Use only a very mild soap like unscented Dove, Alpha-Kert, Lubriderm or Basis. Remember that you probably do not need to wash areas such as the legs, arms or trunk, but need to use the soap primarily in the armpits and groin.
2. Keep your bath or shower water warm, not hot.
3. Use soap before you take a bath, washing it down the drain preferably with a shower. Then sit in the tub for three to five minutes to allow the skin to absorb water. Add the recommended amount of bath oil to the tub, mix it thoroughly with the water, and soak another few minutes. When you get out, pat the skin dry or "drip dry." Do not rub the oil off. Be cautious as the oil will make the tub slippery.
4. Apply recommended bath oil directly to wet skin immediately after taking a shower and before drying off.
5. Avoid exposure to irritants.
6. Apply moisturizers to moist skin, ideally after bathing, for maximum benefit.

7. Use any other recommended creams or pills that you have been given by your physician.
8. Cut the amount of laundry detergent you use by half, thereby reducing any residual detergent in your clothes that might remove skin oil.
9. Humidify your house by leaving water in sinks or tubs with a towel draped over the edge to act as a wick. Consider a good humidifier for your home to use during the winter if your skin is severely dry. Maintaining well-watered plants also increases indoor humidity.

For Questions or Emergency Care:

Call the office at **601-815-3374**. You may need to speak with the doctor on-call.