



MARSHFIELD CLINIC®

HOW YOU CAN PREVENT DRY SKIN

WHAT CAUSES DRY SKIN

Dryness can result from any number of things that remove water from the skin. Skin care products, weather, and bathing habits are the biggest offenders. Products you use to care for your face can actually make it drier. Astringents and alcohol found in clarifying lotions, aftershaves, and splash-on fragrances, among other things, are drying agents. Scrubbing brushes and granular soaps can hurt the face. “Pure” soaps may be called that because they do not contain additives such as moisturizers. Replace these drying soaps with soaps that have built-in moisturizers or the ones recommended by dermatologists for people with dry or sensitive skin.

Examples of these soaps are: Aveeno®, Basis®, Dove® unscented, Purpose®, Neutrogena® for Dry Skin, Oilatum®-AD. Recommended non-soap cleansers are: Cetaphil® lotion, Aquanil lotion, or Eucerin® Dry Skin Care Cleansing Lotion.

Cold, wind, hot sun, and low humidity all dry out the skin. Although many people complain of dry skin only in the winter, others have summer dryness as well. Swimming may contribute to the problem, because the chlorine in the pools and salt in ocean water can irritate the skin. Lying in the hot sun causes loss of water through evaporation. Bathing habits may be the most common causes of dry skin. Hot water and prolonged bathing are not advised if dryness is a problem.

WHY SHOULD I PREVENT DRY SKIN

Dry skin is one of the main causes of itchy skin. It can trigger other skin problems such as eczema or breaks in the skin which can lead to infection.

HOW SHOULD I CHANGE MY BATHING HABITS

Bathe in warm, *not hot* water, and limit your bath or shower to 5 minutes. Wash with moisture-containing soap or one made for sensitive skin.

If you like to use bath oil, add it to the water *after, not before*, you’ve soaked for a minute or two. Your skin will have absorbed some water already, and the oil will seal it in.

Pat yourself dry with a towel immediately after bathing. Don’t towel vigorously. Waiting too long to dry off will allow the water that has filled your cells to evaporate. As soon as you’ve patted yourself dry, apply moisturizer to lock in the water your skin soaked up during the bath or shower. Examples of acceptable moisturizers are: Aquaphor®, Eucerin® cream, Vanicream® cream, white petrolatum (Fougera® brand name).

HOW SHOULD I APPLY MOISTURIZERS

Always apply a moisturizer after bathing. Keep a bottle of lotion near the sink so you can use it after washing your hands. Many people prefer to use lotions and creams during the day because they are less greasy. Ointments provide better moisture coverage, but may be limited to nighttime.

If you are prone to acne, talk to your dermatologist before selecting a moisturizer. Some moisturizers are comedogenic (produce blackheads); they can cause acne or make it worse.

Don’t get carried away with too much moisturizing. The more products you use on your skin, the greater the risk of reacting to something and being unable to identify the cause. Some people overuse moisturizers to prevent dry skin and wrinkles. Moisturizers work *when applied* to seal water into the skin. They can prevent and improve dry skin today and tomorrow, but not many years down the road.

While you’re thinking about moisturizing your skin, don’t forget to add moisture to your environment. If your home is dry, use a room humidifier to increase the moisture content of the air surrounding your skin. More water is lost by evaporation in dry air, than in moist air.

DRY SKIN DO'S AND DON'TS

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bathe or shower in luke warm/tepid water• Limit bathing time to 5 minutes a day• Put on moisturizer right after bathing; use lotion after washing your hands• Limit your skin cream collection to one or two products; read labels on toiletries and avoid those with alcohol• Ask your dermatologist to recommend a noncomedogenic moisturizer (one that won't make acne worse)• Towel dry when you get out of the bath or pool• Rinse off chlorine and salt water• Humidify your home in the winter, or year- round if you live in a dry climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take hot showers or baths• Take long showers or baths• Put bath oil in the tub while it is filling• Towel vigorously• Leave the bathroom without applying moisturizer• Wash with a "pure" or granular soap• Use astringents or alcohol-based products• Use too many creams or ointments• Use moisturizers if you have acne, without talking to your doctor first• "Air dry" after bathing or swimming• Forget to shower after swimming• Stay in dry air for 24 hours a day