



Heartland Dermatology

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Diseases of the Skin
Phototherapy
Mohs Micrographic Surgery for
difficult or recurrent skin cancers
Laser Surgery
Sclerotherapy
Collagen
Botox
Liposculpture

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Dry Skin Care

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Dry skin is a very common problem, especially in the winter where it gives rise to “winter itch.” Even if your skin is only mildly dry, it can result in severe itch sensations which feel like “bugs in the skin.” The solution to this problem is very simple. If you don't treat this, you can get severe itching and even rashes on your skin just from the skin being too dry.

The most important thing to understand about your skin is that oil and moisturizers are important in preventing water from evaporating from your skin. An important part of treating dry skin is to trap water in your skin by applying a moisturizer immediately after drying off from the shower or bath. When the humidity is low (as it is indoors when your furnace is running a lot), water from your skin will evaporate into the air, leaving your skin dry, scaly and cracked.

If your skin is mildly dry, you need only do a few simple things to help your skin. First make sure you are using a mild soap. Next, use that soap only under the breasts, the armpits and in the groin. These are the areas that cause body odor, and you really don't need to scrub your arms and legs unless they are really dirty from changing the grease on your snowmobile or something. Your arms and legs also have less sebaceous glands (oil glands) on them, so it is easy to strip off oil here and end up with very dry skin very quickly. In the shower, try not to use scalding hot water — this will remove oil from your skin even more. When you are drying off, don't buff yourself dry with the towel, pat dry, leaving your skin moist or even a little wet. Within a few minutes you need to apply moisturizer in order to seal this moisture into your skin. See the lists of moisturizers at the end of this sheet. If you are experiencing itching when you are in bed, you might also want to apply moisturizer before bedtime as well.

If your skin is extremely dry, you will need to do some slightly different things to really hydrate your skin. First, be sure that you are using a mild soap (listed below), washing only under the breasts, armpits and in the groin. After showering or bathing, pat dry, leaving the skin moist. Then within a few minutes, apply a moisturizer (you will want to use one of the ones listed for extremely dry skin). If this isn't helping too much, you should plan some time to do “hydrating baths” once or twice a day, until your skin is better. Soak in the tub for 10-15 minutes until your fingertips get crinkly. Then pat dry and apply moisturizer liberally. I would do this for 1-2 weeks. Should these measures fail, you should probably see a dermatologist (you may need a referral from your family



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doctor for this depending on your insurance).

Mild soaps:

Dove
Basis (for dry skin)
Aveeno bar (not the powder)
Neutrogena (expensive and melts fast)
Tone
Caress
avoid deodorant soaps, Ivory

Moisturizers for mildly dry skin

You can use lighter moisturizers if your skin is only a little dry, but remember, greasier moisturizers work better, but they don't feel as nice. You can also try some of the moisturizers in the "Moisturizers for extremely dry skin" list if these moisturizers don't cut the mustard.

- Curel
- Lubriderm
- Moisturel
- baby oil
- many others too numerous to list

Moisturizers for extremely dry skin

Moisturizers containing alpha hydroxy acids (lactic acid or glycolic acid). These work very well for dry skin and have the advantage of not feeling terribly greasy.

- Amlactin
- lac hydrin 5
- Eucerin plus
- Nutraderm 30
- Epilyt lotion
- many others. Look for products containing "alpha hydroxy acids" or "lactic acid" or "glycolic acid"

Greasier moisturizers great job of holding moisture in the skin because they form an occlusive barrier the prevents moisture from escaping the skin. If applied heavily, you will feel very greasy, so these are best applied in a very thin coating (vanishingly thin layers are necessary when using the greasiest ones like vaseline or crisco...).

- Eucerin
- Aquaphilic ointment
- vaseline
- crisco

Remember, when you apply a greasy ointment to dry skin without hydrating it (soaking in the tub or showering), you haven't really "moisturized" your skin — you have just turned it into greasy dry skin which



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looks a little better because the grease makes the scaliness less apparent. You really want to get some water into your skin before applying these greasy moisturizers to get maximal benefit.

One more time:

- **use a mild soap**
- **limit soap application to areas which give body odor**
- **pat dry**
- **apply moisturizer daily or twice daily**

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