



# Soothe and Smooth

**W**hen temperatures and humidity drop and the thermostat rises, your body responds with cracked heels, flaky skin and a dry, irritated feeling.

Dry skin is the result of lack of water in the skin's outermost layer, the epidermis, which can come about in a number of ways. Long or frequent baths and showers, especially in hot water, are drying because they break down the lipid barrier in the epidermis, allowing water to escape. Deodorant and antibacterial soaps are also extremely drying. And our skin naturally becomes drier with age.

To help your skin survive winter, use a humidifier in your home, take short baths or showers (less than 10 minutes) in warm (not hot) water and use a mild soap (such as Dove or Neutrogena) or non-soap cleanser (such as Aveeno, CeraVe, Cetaphil or Oil of Olay).

Now, here's the most important part: Moisturize immediately after getting out of the shower to prevent water evaporating from your skin. I have to admit that because I'm always so cold during the winter, I indulge in extra-long hot showers. I

## How to protect your skin from the ravages of winter.

BY DR. MELISSA SCHWARZSCHILD

try to make up for it by applying a moisturizer both in the morning, after showering, and at night, before going to bed.

But with the array of moisturizers out there, where do you start?

There are three major types of moisturizers: reparative, which give back to the skin important missing or damaged components; humectants, which draw moisture into the epidermis; and sealants, which coat the epidermis to prevent water loss.

Aveeno moisturizers are reparative in nature. They contain ceramides, the most abundant lipids in the epidermis, thus enhancing our skin's ability to retain moisture.

Humectants include urea, lactic acid, glycerin, propylene glycol and panthenol.

Sealants include petrolatum (think of Vaseline petroleum jelly) and dimethicone (your hairdresser has probably told you to look for this substance in hairstyling products because it seals the hair's cuticle).

Generally speaking, creams and ointments are much more hydrating than lotions. So anything liquid-y enough to come out of a pump bottle is mostly water, which will simply evaporate off your skin. For me, the perfect moisturizer is a cream that contains several humectants to attract moisture and a sealant to hold in that moisture. For skin that is dry and flaky, I recommend using an exfoliating cream such as glycolic acid in addition to a strong moisturizer.

What about dry, cracked hands and the dry, thick, calloused heels we often have during the winter months?

Here's my solution: First, make sure you have a urea-based humectant, Vaseline petroleum jelly or Aquaphor, and a pair of cotton gloves and cotton socks. Next, smooth a layer of urea cream all over your skin, and then a thick layer of Vaseline petroleum jelly or Aquaphor on top of that to seal in the moisture. Finally, slip your hands into the gloves and your feet into the socks and go to bed.

While this may not be your best bedtime look, if you follow this routine a few nights in a row, your skin will look and feel wonderful. So go ahead and treat your body right this winter – your skin will be smooth and ready to bare after the long hibernation.

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