

# Scratch Having Dry, Itchy Skin This Winter

By Jane Chew



Winter weather and the holiday season can wreak havoc on the skin. As the temperature drops, hot air heats many homes and workplaces. This dry, warm air can dehydrate the skin. Many people also indulge in long hot showers on a cold morning. Again, the skin's natural oils are stripped by the hot water. When the skin is extremely dried, some develop winter itch. Rashes can also occur where the skin is most parched.

There are a few ways to prevent moisture from leaving the skin as well as ways to replace lost moisture. Take shorter, just warm

showers. Only small amounts of a gentle soap should be used. After the shower, everyone should moisturize. If your skin feels normal, a lotion should suffice. If you have a tendency for dry skin or you have a history of eczema, a moisturizing cream would be more effective. Moisturizers with alpha hydroxyl or other fruit acids may help retain moisture and smooth out rough, dull skin. If you have a very dry home or work environment, a room humidifier may help keep moisture in the air.

Winter itch is a common rash that people develop when the skin becomes too dry. Red, scaly patches may develop anywhere on the skin. The most common areas are the lower back, legs and abdomen. Over-the-counter

cortisone creams may help, but if the rash persists, you may need to see a dermatologist.

Don't forget to take care of your skin as the holidays subside and we become immersed in our winter routines. Many people let skin care fall by the wayside as they get busier. Try to have well-balanced meals and drink lots of water. Too much alcohol and caffeine can dehydrate the skin as well. A good night's sleep is wonderful for the skin and keeps under-eye circles to a minimum. Many people also put away their sunscreen during the winter months. However, there is plenty of sun, even in January. Sunscreen should be worn on a daily basis to decrease the aging effects of the sun.

Wintertime is a great time to have skin refreshing procedures. A thorough facial can be relaxing as well as an effective way to replace lost moisture. Body scrubs or polishes can lift off dead skin cells and smooth out winter dry skin. Chemical peels can even out blemishes and age spots that appeared during the warmer months.

All it takes is a few small steps to have healthy skin during the winter months. Just moisturize and relax.

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