TREATMENT FOR DRY SKIN

Dry skin occurs most often in the winter and in the elderly, but can develop during any season and in any age group. When severe, dry skin can lead to eczema and can worsen many other skin conditions, including psoriasis.

Humidity
Raise indoor humidity during dry winter months. The best way is to add a humidifier onto forced-air furnace systems. Portable humidifiers, although less effective, can be helpful in high-use rooms.

Showers
Keep showers brief - “in and out.” Use warm water, not hot. Limit soap use to the face, neck, and body folds. The type of soap is not important, but rather that its use be limited to areas where oil and bacteria accumulate. Even “mild” soaps will dry the skin on open areas (legs, arms).

Baths
Keep baths very short (less than 5 minutes) or extend to very long (more than 45 minutes). Baths that are 10-20 minutes long may actually dry the skin by removing protective oils. More than 45 minutes of soaking is required to hydrate the skin. Avoid bubble baths. Bath oils (e.g. Alpha-Keri Bath Oil) can provide additional lubrication and help soften the skin (caution: the tub gets slippery).

Moisturizers
Use Vanicream, Cetaphil, Cerave, Eucerin, Vaseline or Moisturel cream. The best moisturizers are heavy and greasy ointments (e.g.Vaseline petroleum jelly). These preparations are sometimes cosmetically unacceptable, but a heavy cream (approaching the consistency of shortening) is most effective because it seals moisture in the skin’s top layers. Lotions which pour or pump out of containers may be easier to use but do not protect or moisturize as well. Whenever possible, use fragrance-free heavy cream.

Other tips
Avoid rubbing alcohol, Calamine lotion, Benadryl lotion, long hot showers, and soaping the entire body daily. Eczema resulting from severe skin dryness requires medicated creams as well as moisturizers. Dryness of the skin is not affected by water intake or water pills. The above information applies to areas below the neck. Facial “dryness” is more complex and requires individual evaluation.

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