

## Dermatologists' top tips for relieving dry skin

Simple changes can soothe dry skin

Following the same skin care routine year round may not work so well when the humidity drops. Without a change in your skin care, dry air can make fine lines and wrinkles more noticeable. Dry skin can itch, flake, crack, and even bleed.

To help heal dry skin and prevent its return, dermatologists recommend the following.

Prevent baths and showers from making dry skin worse. When your skin is dry, be sure to:

- Close the bathroom door

- Limit your time in the shower or bath to 5 or 10 minutes

- Use warm rather than hot water

- Wash with a gentle, fragrance-free cleanser

- Apply enough cleanser to remove dirt and oil, but avoid using so much that you see a thick lather

- Blot your skin gently dry with a towel

- Slather on the moisturizer immediately after drying your skin

Dry skin is a common issue that can affect anyone. To help, dermatologists recommend following these bathing tips to get dry skin relief. [Click the image above to download a PDF.](#)

Apply moisturizer immediately after washing. Ointments, creams, and lotions (moisturizers) work by trapping existing moisture in your skin. To trap this much-needed moisture, you need to apply a moisturizer within few minutes of:

- Drying off after a shower or bath

- Washing your face or hands

Use an ointment or cream rather than a lotion. Ointments and creams are more effective and less irritating than lotions. Look for a cream or ointment that contains an oil such as olive oil or jojoba oil. Shea butter also works well. Other ingredients that help to soothe dry skin include lactic acid, urea, hyaluronic acid, dimethicone, glycerin, lanolin, mineral oil, and petrolatum.

Tip

Carry a non-greasy hand cream with you, and apply it after each hand washing. This will greatly help relieve dry skin.

Wear lip balm. Choose a lip balm that feels good on your lips. Some healing lip balms can irritate your lips. If your lips sting or tingle after you apply the lip balm, switch to one that does not cause this reaction.

Use only gentle, unscented skin care products. Some skin care products are too harsh for dry, sensitive skin. When your skin is dry, stop using:

- Deodorant soaps

- Skin care products that contain alcohol, fragrance, retinoids, or alpha-hydroxy acid (AHA)

Avoiding these products will help your skin retain its natural oils.

Wear gloves. Our hands are often the first place we notice dry skin. You can reduce dry, raw skin by wearing gloves. Be sure to put gloves on before you:

- Go outdoors in winter

- Perform tasks that require you to get your hands wet

- Get chemicals, greases, and other substances on your hands

Choose non-irritating clothes and laundry detergent. When our skin is dry and raw even clothes and laundry detergent can be irritating. To avoid this:

- Wear cotton or silk under your clothing made of wool or another material that feels rough

- Use laundry detergent labeled “hypoallergenic”

Stay warm without cozying up to a fireplace or other heat source. Sitting in front of an open flame or other heat source can dry your skin.

Add moisture to the air. Plug in a humidifier. If you can check your home heating system, find out if you have a humidifier on the system — and whether it’s working.

When to see a dermatologist

Your skin should start to feel better quickly. If these changes do not bring relief, you may want to see a dermatologist. Very dry skin can require a prescription ointment or cream. Dry skin also can be a sign of a skin condition that needs treatment. A dermatologist can examine your skin and explain what can help reduce your discomfort.

Related AAD resources

[Dry skin relief \(video\)](#)

Advertisement

Advertisement