



# Winter Dry Skin

## PATIENT EDUCATION SERIES

Problems with winter dry skin vary a great deal from one person to another, but the common symptoms are generalized itching of the skin, usually worse on thighs and arms. The itching is caused by a loss of skin oils.

The following program is designed to minimize the problem as much as possible. For some people, this may be completely effective, whereas for others our winter environment is so dry that only partial relief may occur.

### Carefully follow these steps:

1. Long, hot soapy showers and baths are undesirable as they leach the natural oils out of the skin. Water should be as cool as is comfortable. Baths and showers should be as short as possible, just long enough to accomplish soaping and rinsing. It is advisable to use moisturizing soaps; Basis, Aveeno, Neutrogena Tone or Dove Unscented are among the best. Ivory is one of the most drying.
2. After getting out of the bath, blot (do not rub) your skin to dry off. There is an almost microscopically thin layer of protective skin which will be rubbed off with vigorous toweling.
3. While the skin is still wet, apply any one of a number of skin moisturizers to trap the moisture in the skin. Keri lotion or baby oil are 2 types. Moisturizers can be used at other times during the day and need not be confined solely to after-bath use.
4. Do everything possible to keep your room moist. A cold steam vaporizer is your best bet, and it should run constantly. Although a warm steam vaporizer will accomplish the same thing, it has additional hazards of hot water and possible burns from tripping over the cord and so we do not suggest them for that reason. Other ways to keep a room moist are potted plants, pans of water on the radiator, wet towels hung on a clothesline, etc. These may help somewhat in relieving the dry conditions. Unless you are disposing of close to a gallon of water a day in a room, the humidity is going to be very low.
5. It may be necessary to use an antihistamine to decrease itchiness. Antihistamines often cause drowsiness, which makes them useful at night. Avoid scratching, which prolongs and worsens the condition.