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 only partial relief may occur.

**Maintaining Healthy Skin in the Winter**

**Bathing/Showering suggestions:**

- Avoid long, hot showers and baths as they leach the natural oils out of the skin. Use lukewarm water. Try shortened bathing time.
- Mild soap tends to be the least irritating and most protective of the skin barrier during the winter months: try Cetaphil, Basis, Aveeno, Neutrogena Tone, Dove Unscented, and Vanicream. Avoid Ivory as it is one of the most drying.
- After getting out of the bath, blot (do not rub) your skin.
- While the skin is still wet, apply a moisturizer to trap the moisture in the skin.
- Greasier products (aquaphor, vaseline) tend to be most effective. If you are uncomfortable using a greasier product during the day, you may prefer to use these products only at night.

**Living space Modifications:**

- Increase the humidity of indoor air during the winter.
- A cold steam vaporizer is your best bet and it should run constantly.
- Potted plants and/or pans of water on the radiator may also increase the humidity in your room.

**Medications:**

- It may be necessary to use an over-the-counter antihistamine (such as cetirizine, loratadine, or diphenhydramine) to decrease itchiness. Antihistamines often cause drowsiness, which makes them useful at night.
- Avoid scratching, which prolongs and worsens the condition.

In patients who develop eczema as a result of dry skin, it is advised to follow up with a medical professional.