

Ah, winter skin.... I mostly enjoy winter. However, I do not enjoy what winter does to my skin. It becomes dry, itchy and cracks my fingertips around my fingernails. I'm sure I am not the only one who suffers winter skin issues. The following are some things that have helped me and some others that would be helpful.

Hot bath – soaking in a hot tub after a long day is so relaxing, but not good for your skin. A warm shower of no more than 5 minutes is all that's required to get clean and not deplete the skin of essential oils. Using an oil-based body wash (I use Eucerin Calming Body Wash) instead of soap is especially beneficial. Pat dry with a towel, do not rub. Apply an oil based moisturizer immediately, face to feet.

Moisturize, moisturize, moisturize – change your moisturizer with the season. The water-based moisturizer you use during the summer months won't do the job when it's colder. An oil-based moisturizer will create a protective layer on your skin that retains more moisture than a lotion or a cream. Some oils are not suited for use on the face as they clog the pores. Choose non-clogging oils such as mineral oil, almond oil or avocado oil. Lotions that contain glycerin, sorbitol and alpha-hydroxy acids attract moisture to your skin.

The skin on your hands is thinner than most other areas of your body and has fewer oil glands, therefore, it's harder to keep your hands moist, but especially in cold weather. Frequent hand-washing has been stressed with the concern of all the different types of bacteria and viruses. It stands to reason, with all that frequent washing we need to moisturize our hands more frequently as well. Keep a bottle of moisturizer by each sink in your home and carry a small bottle with you.

Feet are even harder to keep moist. If they are especially dry and cracked, periodically soak them in an oil bath, dry thoroughly and use an exfoliate to remove the dead skin. Follow with a moisturizer that contains petroleum jelly. A severe case of dry, cracked feet would benefit from the following nightly regime over the course of a week. Slather on petroleum jelly and wear socks to bed. I know this might be a little uncomfortable, but baby smooth feet are the reward.

Sunscreen – the sun is an enemy of the skin. It dries the skin, ages it and forms those ugly "liver spots". Sunscreen is not just for summer. Many make-up manufacturers are adding sunscreen, but to be on the safe side, use a sunscreen under your make-up. The SPF should be at least 15. Don't forget your hands. Apply a half hour before going outside. Reapply if you stay outside for a lengthy period of time. Guys, this goes for you as well.

Humidifier – If you have a whole house humidifier on your furnace, wonderful. You probably don't have any problem with dry skin. These are costly, but definitely worth the expenditure. Small room humidifiers can be placed in various rooms to increase the overall moisture in your home. They are especially beneficial in the bedroom if you also wake up with dry nasal passages.

The weather outside is frightful, but your skin doesn't have to be. Incorporating a few of the things mentioned above may help give your winter skin a soft smooth appearance as well as that rosy glow that comes with this time of year.