ADVANCED DERMATOLOGY
of the Midlands

Dry Skin

Causes

Dry skin is a very common problem that afflicts many people. It becomes more common as we age because our oil and sweat glands produce less natural moisturizers. Also, as we go through life, the moisture content in the skin steadily declines. The condition is also more common in cooler months due to the reduced humidity. This is especially true in the winter, when we spend long hours in furnace-heated buildings.

Symptoms

Dry skin first and foremost can be itchy. In fact, it can cause us to itch all over our body if it is severe enough. Dryness can be irritating to the skin and in some cases can cause a form of irritation dermatitis (eczema) known as asteatotic dermatitis (dry skin eczema). Also, dry skin loses some of its normal protective barrier functions. It is then more likely to split, crack, or even become infected.

Recommendations for Care

Moisturize, moisturize, moisturize. At least once a day, every day if you or your doctor think you are experiencing dry skin. Some patients need to do this two or even three times a day. Skin that is already moist takes and responds to moisturizer best. For this reason, consider first moisturizing in the morning as soon as you come out of the bath and before completely drying off with the towel. In general moisturizing creams are better than lotions. Ointments are even better than creams, but many find them to be too greasy.

Certain soaps may be more drying than others. Some liquid soaps can be particularly drying. It may be best to minimize soap usage. Consider using it only in the skin folds, face, and private area. Clean with water alone in other areas. Do not scrub/rub skin clean. Clean gently.

Shower or bathe in warm but not hot water. Hot water is damaging/irritating to the skin and can worsen dry skin. Limit your bath/shower to no more than 10 minutes.

Handwashing should be done in a similar fashion during the day: lukewarm water and immediate application of a moisturizing cream to moist hands.

In general, trying to drink more water to hydrate the skin is of little benefit.

Recommended Moisturizers

Aquaphor™ Cetaphil™

Vanicream™ Eucerin™

Lubriderm™ CeraVe™

Recommended Soaps

Fragrance Free Dove™

Vanicream Bar Soap™