

## **DRY SKIN**

Dry skin (winter itch) is most common in your lower legs, arms, flanks (sides of the abdomen), and thighs. The symptoms most often associated with dry skin include: scaling, itching and cracks in the skin.

Dry skin is common. It happens more often in the winter when cold air outside and heated air inside cause low humidity. Forced-air furnaces make skin even drier. The skin loses moisture and may crack and peel, or become irritated and inflamed. Bathing too frequently, especially with harsh soaps, may contribute to dry skin. eczema may cause dry skin.

It may help to change your bathing habits:

- Keep baths or showers short.
- Use warm (not hot) water.
- Use as little soap as possible. Limit its use to face, armpits, and genitals if you can. Try mild cleansers like Aveeno or Cetaphil or mild soaps like Neutrogena or Dove.
- Dry your skin thoroughly but gently -- pat, DON'T rub.
- Take baths or showers less often.

Also, increase skin and body moisture:

- Use bath oils and moisturizers at least daily. Thick, greasy moisturizers work best. Avoid products with alcohol. Apply just after a bath or shower, when your skin is still damp.
- Use a humidifier if the air is dry.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day.

Apply cool compresses to itchy areas, and try over-the-counter cortisone creams or lotions if your skin is inflamed. If this is not enough, talk to your doctor about possible prescription lotions.

Call your healthcare provider if:

- You feel itchy without a visible rash
- Dryness and itching are preventing you from sleeping
- You have any open cuts or sores from scratching
- Home care measures do not relieve your dryness and itching

Your healthcare provider will perform a physical examination with careful attention to all parts of your skin. To better understand the cause of the dry skin, your doctor may ask:

- When did your dry skin develop or has it always been dry?
- Are all parts of your body affected? If not, what are the specific locations involved?
- What seems to make the dryness worse?
- Does anything make it feel better?
- What are your bathing habits?

- Do you have any other symptoms?