

5 Ways To Combat Dry, Cracked Winter Skin

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Blustery winter days wreak havoc on our complexions, leaving them all sorts of irritated—from flaky-dry to red, chapped, and cracked. Time to reclaim your fresh face. Here, dermatologists fill us in on how to restore soft, supple skin.



Moisturize

The key to keeping facial skin exposed to frigid conditions fresh is to moisturize, says dermatologist Gary Goldenberg, MD, assistant professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. “Smooth it on before going outdoors and again after arriving at your destination.” Dr. Goldenberg recommends applying Aquaphor Healing Ointment (to your face, lips and nostril interiors) before heading out, and barrier repair creams when returning home, including Cetaphil RestoraDerm or CeraVe Moisturizing Lotion. “Also moisturize immediately post-showering—while skin is still wet,” says Karthik Krishnamurthy, DO, assistant professor of dermatology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine who is also a dermatologist at Montefiore Medical Center. He advises applying petroleum jelly (or try Dr. Goldenberg’s post-shower favorite, Kiehl’s Crème de Corps Whipped Body Butter), then toweling dry. “The water can’t penetrate past the oil, so this forces it back into your skin, keeping it moist but not greasy,” he adds.

Shower Smart

While ultra-appealing and soothing, hot showers are a no-no, says Dr. Goldenberg, adding, “hot water dehydrates skin, so I recommend short and lukewarm showers.” Dr. Krishnamurthy concurs, advising showering once daily for 10 minutes max. “The longer the shower,” he says, “the more natural oils and nutrients are lost.”

Hydrate & Eat Healthy

If you’re dehydrated, your skin is dry. Eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and drinking many fluids keeps skin looking healthy, says Dr. Goldenberg. What’s more, “B-vitamins deficiencies can lead to dry, itchy skin,” says Dr. Krishnamurthy. “But eating lean turkey, tuna, whole grains, lentils and bananas helps maintain healthy levels.” Alcohol is another skin saboteur that depletes B-vitamins, and low vitamin C results in fragile skin. So stockpile citrus fruits, green/red peppers and tomato juice. Dr. Krishnamurthy recommends supplementing with a multi-vitamin when needed.

Protect Lips

Cold weather, constant lip-licking, lip-picking and/or allergic reactions all cause dry and chapped lips. Cold, dry weather absorbs moisture from lips, toughening them. Lip-licking does the same. “Coat your lips with Aquaphor—it’s inexpensive and found in drugstores,” says Dr. Goldenberg, who generally doesn’t recommend ChapStick, which, he says, can contain allergens.

Use Gentle Detergent

When temps plummet, covering your face with a scarf or ski mask only makes sense, to shield yourself from the bitter elements. But once you arrive at your destination, wash your face with a gentle cleanser or wipe, advises Dr. Goldenberg. And when laundering items that brush against your face, use fragrance-free detergents, such as Tide Free and Gentle.