



protecting and pampering winter skin

Oh, the joys of winter! Playing outdoors in the snow, snuggling up in a cozy warm house next to a roaring fire, relaxing in a nice long hot bubble bath...buying endless bottles of moisturizing lotion for the inevitable dry skin.

Unfortunately, many of the winter activities that give us pleasure take moisture from our skin. But with a little extra TLC, it is possible to keep your skin soft and supple all winter long. And well-hydrated skin looks better, feels better and is healthier, too.

Environmental Protection

Whether we're indoors or out, the winter season is brutal to our skin.

The most powerful weapon in the battle against dry skin is preventing it in the first place. Dr. John DeSpain of DeSpain Dermatology Center and Skintuition Medical Spa in Columbia, Mo., emphasizes that it's "easier to prevent dry skin than to correct it."

This time of year, heated indoor environments are usually pretty dry. The best way to add moisture to the arid air in your own home is with a whole house humidifier. An alternative is to place a portable humidifier in the bedroom, where we spend roughly a third of our time.

Step outside and the elements become your skin's enemy. Protect your lips and face with a moisturizing ointment. Cover your body with wind-resistant gloves and outerwear. Then go forth and hit those post-holiday sales.



Bathing Beauty

Consider the typical daily shower. The steady stream of hot water robs skin of its protective layer of oil, causing it to become dry. Scrub with a harsh soap and still more moisture is stripped from the skin. Step out to dry and as the water evaporates from your skin, it takes yet more moisture with it.

So what's a girl to do? "Keep it simple. Keep it short," says DeSpain.

DeSpain recommends taking short, cooler showers and baths, using gentle cleansers and leaving some water on the body when drying off.

"Pat dry, don't rub," he says. "The less friction on the skin, the better." And this is the best time to rub in moisturizing emollients, immediately after bathing, while the

skin is still moist. After bathing is also a good time to use nail cream or ointment, or even to trim nails as they are not as brittle.

When it comes to choosing the right cleansing lotions, again, simple is best. DeSpain recommends plain white bar soap – not liquid, not anti-bacterial, just a basic, mild cleanser.

Robin Prica-Davis, manager of Clovers Natural Market on Forum, agrees with the simple bar soap approach and has her own favorite: Dead Sea Salt Soap, a natural triple-milled soap made by One With Nature.

Pampering

For routine body care, ointments and creams are generally more effective mois-



turizers than lotions. Select products that are gentle and unscented. But, wait a minute – we love those fragrant lotions!

“Save them for special occasions,” says DeSpain. “Fragrances can be irritating to the skin.”

If you have sensitive skin, you may want to follow advice from the November 2008 Mayo Clinic Health Letter, which notes that almost any moisturizer ingredient can cause skin irritation or allergy, but fragrances, dyes, lanolin and the preservatives parabens and formaldehyde tend to be the most common offenders. Prica-Davis says she has had excellent results with natural lotions rich in essential oils such as jojoba bean, olive oil and shea butter.

For the face, a light lotion is generally preferred over heavier ointments and creams. Be sure to select products designed specifically for the face, as they are less likely to clog pores.

What’s your favorite winter skin prevention or treatment tip? Send us a note at womenshealth@socket.net

Of course, some body parts are more prone to dryness than others. The lower legs, with fewer oil glands, tend to dry out easily. Shaving with a good emollient can help minimize damaging friction.

Lacking in oil glands and the protection of a thick outer layer, lip tissue is extremely vulnerable to moisture loss. Constantly being moistened by saliva then dried by breathing, lips endure an ongoing cycle of evaporation. There are many ointments on the market designed exclusively for lips. One highly effective, albeit not fancy, lip treatment is plain white petroleum jelly.

In fact, a big ol’ tub of petroleum

jelly actually goes a long way in caring for winter skin. Before getting into bed at night, slather it on your feet and hands, cover them with cotton gloves and socks, and wake up with softer skin (personally, I say OK to socks, but gloves will likely freak out the hubby).

Special Treatment

In most cases, taking these simple measures to protect and moisturize should ease your winter dry skin troubles. If dry skin worsens despite using the above self-care measures, contact your dermatologist, who may be able to offer specialized or prescription remedies. And – think spring.

SHOPPING FOR SUPPLE SKIN MAY BE EASIER THAN YOU THINK

I was standing in line at a Columbia drugstore, when the customers ahead of me began talking to the clerk about nothing other than *the best remedies for dry skin*.

Sweet serendipity.

I leaned forward to listen with intent interest – and the strange feeling that universe was generously handing me something here.

What did I learn? One woman touted the virtues of petroleum jelly. Another swore by olive oil straight from the pantry. The clerk pointed at the massive display of skin care products and noted the obvious, “Everyone has a personal preference.”

Indeed.

As for me, I’ll save the olive oil for my pesto, thank you. But I *will* try out some of the brands I found commonly recommended by dermatologists and readily available – Cetaphil, Curel, Aveeno, Aquaphor, Olay, Neutrogena, Dove, Basis and CeraVe, to name a few. The following is sampling of products within these particular lines.

- Cetaphil Daily Cleanser
- Aveeno Skin Relief Moisturizing Lotion
- Aquaphor Healing Ointment

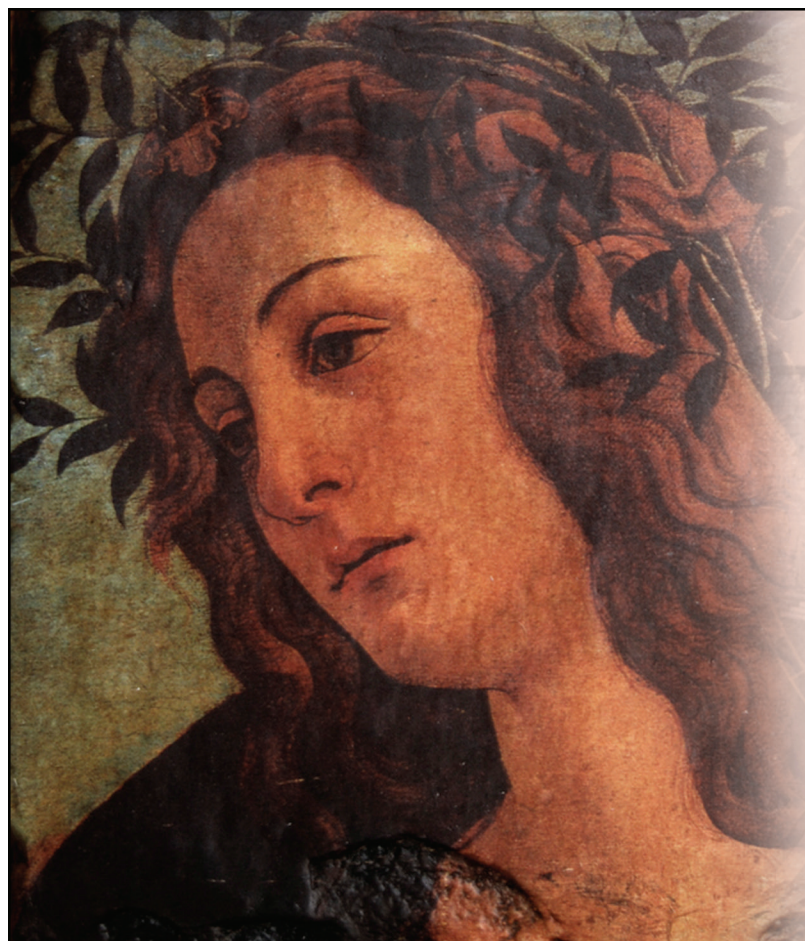
- Curel Ultra Healing 24-Hour Daily Moisturizing Lotion for Extra-Dry Skin
- Olay Regenerist UV Defense Regenerating Lotion SPF 15
- Neutrogena Healthy Skin Anti-Wrinkle Cream
- Dove Sensitive Essentials Day lotion
- Eucerin Extra Protective moisture lotion SPF 30
- CeraVe Hydrating Cleanser

Of course, your own dermatologist or skin care technician can best advise you on which products are the most suitable for your skin.

Or you can go hang out in line at the drugstore.

ConsumerSearch.com lists products according to their popularity.

- Body Lotions
www.consumersearch.com/body-lotion
- Facial Cleansers
www.consumersearch.com/facial-cleansers
- Moisturizers
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