

Tricks For Avoiding Dry, Itchy Winter Skin

NEW YORK (AP) — If it's dry and cold where you live, work or play, it's winter skin season, but the fixes may not be as obvious as they seem.

Rather than bide your time until April, The Associated Press asked dermatologists for tips on seasonal care and protection to stave off itchy, flaky and cracked skin.

• **Don't take extra hot showers.** As much as you want the comfort of that heat when it's chilly, there's less moisture in the air during winter and hot showers can further dehydrate your skin, said Dr. Neil Sadick, clinical professor of dermatology at Weill Cornell Medical College.

"Make showers as tepid as you can tolerate," he said. If you can't stand the chill, find a space heater safe for bathroom use.

Dr. Alicia Zalka, associate clinical professor of dermatology at Yale, put it this way: "Take shorter, fewer, cooler or soap free showers." By soap free, she means stay away from products that contain detergents because they can remove protective, essential oils.

• **Don't assume that drinking water or replacing fluids internally is enough to keep your skin healthy during cold weather.**

Zalka is all for drinking water to stay hydrated but cautions that moisture from the extra fluids can evaporate if not trapped by the epidermis, the skin's outer layer. Moisturizing is so important this time of year because it protects the outer layer from winter's wrath while retaining natural moisture from within.

"If you've got the driest of dry skin, the best defense for that is a couple of days of plain old Vaseline, as a a sealer and a protectant," she said. "If the skin is already cracked, it does not sting."

Remember that certain beverages are dehydrating, such as those containing alcohol or caffeine, so consume them in moderation, said Clinique dermatologist Dr. David Orentreich.

• **Don't necessarily stick to the same skin products for face and body.** Orentreich said

a skin care regimen that worked during the warm, humid days of summer may not provide the same results in cold weather.

Change your cleanser from a strong to milder formulation, your exfoliator from strong to gentler and your moisturizer from light to richer, he suggests.

"Humidify the air in your home, especially in your bedroom so that healing and repair can take place while you sleep," Orentreich said.

• **Don't forget sunblock.** It's just as important during winter as it is in summer, experts say, especially during winter sports like skiing at high altitude.

"In the winter it feels cold because very little infrared light reaches the earth," Orentreich said. "The opposite is true in the summer. However, in the winter ultraviolet light is 90 percent as strong as it is in the summer but since we can't feel or see it we mistakenly think it's absent, too."

Application of a broadband screen once a day should suffice, Sadick said.

• **Don't ignore hair and nails.** They're made of the same basic compounds as the skin and crack and split in similar fashion, Zalka said. "I don't think people realize that when nails split it's 90 percent from lack of proper moisture. She said B vitamin supplements can improve skin, hair and nails, especially during winter.

"They're better for the skin when ingested, rather than when you put them on the skin topically," Zalka said.

Orentreich said clothing can protect exposed, sensitive skin such as the cheeks and hands but be careful of fabrics like rough wool that can further irritate chapped skin.

Zalka said wearing slightly loose cotton gloves to bed after applying a sealant will speed the healing process for hurting hands and nails.

For hair, Sadick said use a conditioner more frequently during winter.

Healthy Resolutions For The Year Ahead

As the calendar turns to a new year, the focus of men and women often shifts as well. After the hectic holiday season has come and gone, many people re-dedicate themselves to their personal health and well-being. That renewed dedication might be thanks to all those big holiday meals or it might just be a result of the new calendar year being symbolic of a fresh start.

Regardless of the reasons behind this renewed vigor, the opportunities to make the next 12 months a healthier 12 months abound. While losing weight might the most popular resolution, there are a host of other health-related resolutions individuals can make to improve their lives over the next 365 days.

Resolve to reduce stress

Stress is a major part of most adults' lives, and that's especially so after the hectic holiday season when men and women are pulled in so many different directions. Work is a common cause of stress, but family and personal finances, especially nowadays, are big sources of stress as well. This year, resolve to reduce stress in all aspects of life. At the office, analyze ways in which you can manage time more effectively, including how to best prioritize work projects so you don't always feel as if you're up against a wall. Outside the office, recognize the importance of maintaining a personal life and its relation to reducing stress. Spending time with friends and family can relax you and provide a welcome respite from the stress of the office.

Resolve to eat better

Losing weight and adopting a healthier diet are not necessarily the same thing. While a healthier diet might help you lose weight, the goal of adopting a healthier diet is to improve overall health. A healthy diet can strengthen the body's immune system, making it easier to fight cold, flu and other ailments. A healthy diet can also help in the battle against any preexisting conditions. For example, replacing salt with healthier and flavorful herbs can help reduce high blood pressure, and many people cannot even taste the difference once they start eating.

Resolve to exercise more

Much like changing a diet, exercising more is often seen as a means to weight loss. While that's a positive side effect of daily exercise, the goal should not be to lose weight. Instead, the goal of daily exercise is to get healthier. According to the American College of Sports Medicine, exercise helps lower the risk of heart disease and hypertension by 40 percent while lowering the risk of depression by 30 percent. In addition, men and women with a family history of diabetes should know that regular exercise lowers their risk of type 2 diabetes by nearly 60 percent. So while exercise is a great

means to losing weight, it's even better at helping reduce the risk for serious disease.

When incorporating exercise into a daily routine, start slowly and gradually work your way up to more vigorous exercise regimens. Going full speed from the outset is a great way to increase risk of injury, which could actually restrict your ability to exercise for some time.

Resolve to quit smoking

To nonsmokers, keep up the good work. For smokers, perhaps some statistics are enough to get you on the path toward quitting smoking:

- More than 150,000 Americans were projected to succumb to lung cancer in 2011, according to the National Cancer Institute.
- The Canadian Cancer Society estimated that 20,000 Canadians would lose their lives to lung cancer in 2011.
- More than 6 percent of all deaths in the United Kingdom in 2011 were related to lung cancer, according to Cancer Research UK.

If those statistics aren't enough to get men and women serious about quitting smoking, consider the negative effect secondhand smoke has on your loved ones. The American Cancer Society notes that roughly 3,000 nonsmoking adults experience lung cancer caused by secondhand smoke in the U.S. each year. When making a resolution this year, smokers' top priority should be to quit smoking.

When making resolutions at the start of a new year, men and women often focus on healthy resolutions. But healthy resolutions go beyond losing a few extra pounds, and many involve dedication throughout the year to improve overall health this year and for years to come.



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Did you know?

Many people know that stress can be bad for your mental health, but as it turns out, it can also be bad for your physical health.

Researchers have linked behaviors associated with stress, such as drinking alcohol, using drugs, or even binging on comfort foods, with the deterioration of the adrenal gland. The adrenal gland releases stress hormones that signal to the body whether to fight or get out of the situation (flight).

If mollifying substances are introduced into the body, it negatively affects the delicate way the stress system works, and the adrenal gland eventually putters out. That means the body can be in a constant level of stress, or a person can feel stressed even over minor things. This also impacts the heart, liver, blood pressure, and a number of other factors.

Keeping stress in check is important, but it shouldn't be done in a way that does more harm than good.

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