

Skin Care Tips for the Winter Months

Written by

Dr. Peter Helton

As a board-certified dermatologist specializing in cosmetic dermatology, I've devoted my life to making people look better, and feel better about themselves. But underlying beauty is health, particularly as it relates to skin. Taking proper care of your skin can do more to enhance your appearance than all the lotions, creams and makeup that are often applied to cover up unhealthy skin. It can even help you avoid the rashes and other diseases which necessitate an expensive visit to a dermatologist.

The winter months, of course, pose unique challenges. Constantly switching between unnaturally dry indoor air, and the harsh cold and wind outdoors removes moisture from the skin. While creams and lotions replace some of that moisture, it is far better to take steps to prevent those losses in the first place.

1. Realize that the skin is a living organ, the body's largest, not just a covering like the upholstery on your couch. General health rules regarding nutrition, proper rest and exercise all contribute to the overall health of the skin.

But, there are special rules relating to healthy skin. Here are a few that are especially important during the colder months.

First, keep well hydrated. This is probably easier to remember during summer, but is just as important in winter. In addition to eggnog and champagne, drink at least eight glasses of water a day. This keeps skin moisturized and flushes toxins out of your body.

Next, use sun block. Although skin is less exposed in winter, ultraviolet rays can be particularly intense on clear winter. Even when cloudy, UV rays still penetrate. If you go skiing, UV exposure is even greater. Bottom line, use a good sunscreen that blocks both types of ultraviolet radiation - UVA and UVB.

2. Keep out the chemicals. Your skin wasn't designed to deal with dish soap, bleach, hair coloring and thousands of other everyday chemicals. Many common cleaners and solvents specify the wearing of gloves. Always follow such advice. Even products that are don't require gloves can still suck the oils and moisture out of the skin, leaving it dry, cracked and irritated. This even applies to antibacterial soap. As you can't wear gloves all the time, I recommend Gloves in a Bottle (www.glovesinabottle.com) which I will explain in more detail later.

3. Use gentle cleansers on the face. The face is more delicate than other parts of the body and deserves special treatment. I recommend Cetaphil from Galderma Laboratories (www.galderma.com) for people with dry skin.

4. Get rid of dead skin. Most "dry skin" is actually skin that is ready to fall off. Exfoliation, therefore, should be part of your regular routine. Use a washcloth when washing your face and then work up to something like a loofa if you can. Exfoliation helps moisturizers and other skin care products do a better job. By exfoliating before you apply moisturizer, it isn't blocked by dead cells.

Using Your Body's Defenses

As I mentioned above, keeping your skin healthy and beautiful requires keeping out the harsh chemicals. Since the skin is designed as the barrier between your internal organs and the outside world, it is already very tough. But it wasn't built for the range of chemicals that we

come in contact with today. It is well known that these chemicals are harmful if swallowed. Many are also bad for the skin.

If you get bleach on your hands, it won't kill you, but it will keep you from having the smooth, soft skin you desire. Even if you wear gloves while cleaning, you certainly don't when washing your hands, reading the newspaper or the many other day-to-day activities which remove skin moisture. Then there other parts of the body such as the feet which become dry and rough. Even your elbows or the parts of the arms which touch the edge of your desk when working on the computer need help.

While moisturizers can replace what is lost, they are not an ideal solution. To begin with, they don't prevent the absorption of chemicals into the skin. Then there is the problem of the body's response to the moisturizers. If the body thinks it has enough of something, it cuts down production. For example, drinking caffeine raises the body's production of adrenaline, giving you more energy. Over time, however, the body compensates for the caffeine by cutting down on its adrenaline production. It gets to the point where people can't wake up in the morning till that first cup of coffee hits their bloodstream.

The same applies to moisturizers. Constant use makes the body think it has enough moisture and it cuts back on producing its own moisture. The real answer, like so many other aspects of medicine, is prevention not cure.

This is where Gloves in a Bottle enters the picture. It is a moisturizer which is designed to bond with and protect the skin. It seals the skin to prevent the loss of your own natural moisture as well as providing additional moisture. Most skin products are simply oil based or lanolin based and so they sit on top of the skin where they can wash right off when you clean your hands

or do the dishes. Gloves in a Bottle, on the other hand, does not wash away since it is absorbed into the outer layer of skin. It acts as a protective barrier which keeps inside your own natural moisture while repelling outside chemicals. It is gentle and suitable for all skin types and is a great way to prevent many of the skin problems that wind up in visit to the doctor.

I would not advise using it for severe problems such as open wounds or skin that is so cracked it is bleeding. You should definitely see a physician in such cases. But after the application of the appropriate medication, Gloves in a Bottle can often improve the absorption and effectiveness of the medicine. Consult with your doctor and act accordingly.

Preparing for the Holiday Season

As you paint, decorate and clean your house in preparation for entertaining guests this winter, don't ruin your hands in the process. Follow the above tips and keep your skin as soft as the new fallen snow.

Sidebar -Quick Relief for Skin Problems

Gloves in a Bottle is a quick and easy way of preventing and clearing up a wide variety of skin problems.

Terry Kwiatek, a hairdresser living in Hillsborough, New Jersey, uses it for her hands. For several years she had been having problems with red spots on her hands, particularly in the winter.

"I was always looking for something for my hands since they are in water and chemicals all the time," she explains. "I've tried everything on the market but this is the first thing I've had such success with."

The spots on her hands disappeared a few weeks after she started using the lotion and they haven't returned.

"I think it's the best thing that's come on the market," she says. "It coats the hands and the water just runs off."

For Kim Walker, a home care worker in Kelseyville, California, her feet were the main problem. The skin was cracking, and the feet were itchy and sore. She had a hard time finding shoes that she could wear comfortably because of calluses on her big toes. It was very painful for her to walk.

"For over a year I had been back and forth to the doctors to get medications for it," she says. "I would use the creams, but they would only work for a few days before the problems came back."

A friend gave her a sample of Gloves in a Bottle and the results were immediate.

"After I had been using it for a week or so my feet had cleared up so much I could not believe the difference," she continues. "Even the calluses on my toes have gone down so that I don't have to use sanders on them any more."

Susan Williams, an educator living in Tampa, Florida, uses it to repair the skin damaged caused by the sun.

"All of us living in Florida have lots of sun exposure and as you get older have less moisture in the body," she explains. "This prevents some of the drying out of the skin."

She initially bought the product for friend of hers – a gentleman in his mid eighties. His skin was rough, dry and cracked after many decades spent in the Hawaii and Florida sun. After seeing the dramatic way it healed his skin, the rest of the family started using Gloves in a Bottle. She

likes the way it cleared up the roughness and dryness on her elbows caused by leaning them on the desk. She now keeps a gallon bottle in the bathroom counter.

“I’m not someone who used hand lotion, but this has a silky feeling to it, not greasy at all,” she says. “It really feels good when you put it on and it heals your skin pretty dramatically.”