

Ten Ways to Get Rid of Winter Itch



Oh, that winter itch! Your skin feels as rough and dry as sandpaper. If your skin is chapped, cracked, and inflamed during the coldest months of the year, take heart. Relief is a simple matter of water conservation.

The basic problem is lack of moisture. Anything that steals moisture from the skin will result in dryness and chapping. The drier the air, the more rapidly moisture evaporates. (In winter, heated indoor air tends to be dry.) Also, soap and excessive bathing or showering strips the skin of its natural oils making the problem worse. Add it up and the dehydrated cells begin to shrink and separate like caked mud in a dry lake bed and a network of painful cracks appear on your skin.

Dry skin affects everyone, but older people have it worse because oil production gradually declines with age.

Since you can't change the weather or your age, try these suggestions if you want to prevent winter itch.

- Drink 8 or more glasses of water a day.
- Don't scratch or rub your skin. Do apply moisturizer to your skin daily. Use an oil-based lotion.
- Don't overexpose your skin to water, such as with washing dishes. Wear rubber gloves when you wash dishes.
- Right after washing your hands, put hand cream on to seal in moisture.
- Use petroleum jelly on very dry skin areas.
- Take a shower instead of a bath. Use warm (not hot) water. Pat your skin dry, but not all the way. Apply a moisturizing cream while your skin is damp. Use products with lanolin. If you prefer to bathe, bathe for only 15 to 20 minutes in lukewarm water. Pat yourself dry. Do not rub. Use a bath oil on your skin after bathing. Try sponge baths. Use a washcloth instead of soaping the skin directly. Use a mild liquid cleanser like Cetaphil brand, or use a fatted soap. Avoid deodorant, medicated, or alkaline soaps.
- Don't use moisturizers with fragrances, preservatives, or alcohol.
- Use a night cream for the face. Stay out of the strong sun. Do not use tanning salons. Use a sunblock with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15.
- Lower the setting on your heating thermostat so you're comfortable, not toasty.
- Use a humidifier to add moisture to the air in a room or have a humidifier connected to your furnace. Also, don't sit too close to fireplace heat – it's drying.