

DRY SKIN: OVERVIEW

Overview Symptoms Causes Treatment Self-care



What is dry skin? When skin loses too much water, it becomes dry.

Is dry skin contagious? No.

Relief for dry skin

To relieve extremely dry skin, apply a cream or ointment throughout the day. Creams and ointments tend to be more effective than lotion.



Self-care often heals dry skin

When the air contains little humidity, it's common to develop dry skin. Many people who live in an area with low humidity, such as Southwestern United States, get dry skin.

During the winter, indoor heating or cozying up to a fireplace can rob skin of moisture, making skin dry and chapped.

When low humidity causes dry skin, making some skin care changes can relieve and heal dry skin. Dermatologists recommend that you use plenty of moisturizer. Creams and ointments tend to work better than lotions. When you apply a cream or ointment to your skin, it can hold more moisture in your skin than a lotion.

You'll find the skin care routine that dermatologists recommend for healing dry skin at: [Dermatologists' top tips for relieving dry skin](#)

Dry skin relief can require a dermatologist's help

With the right self-care, many people can heal dry skin at home. When effective, you tend to see improvement within 2 weeks.

If you continue to have dry skin or it worsens, something other than dry air may be causing your dry skin. Excessively dry skin can develop due to:

- An underlying medical condition, such as atopic dermatitis or kidney disease
- Medication you take
- What you touch throughout the day, such as certain foods
- Age

A dermatologist can diagnose what's causing your dry skin. If you have a condition that affects your skin, such as atopic dermatitis, your dermatologist can create a treatment plan for you. Treatment can help control the skin condition and relieve the dryness.

Your dermatologist can also help you get relief from excessively dry skin due to other causes.

Treating dry skin has health benefits

When you treat dry skin, you can feel better. Treating dry skin may also cut your risk of developing another skin condition.

Findings from a large German study suggest that people who live with dry skin may develop irritated skin or an allergic skin reaction.

People over 60 years of age who have very dry skin may have an increased risk of developing a skin infection and bed sores.

Cancer treatment can be a cause

Dry or thickening skin can be a side effect of cancer treatment. If you develop either, see a dermatologist right away. Treatment from a dermatologist can help prevent an infection and other problems.



Effective treatment for dry skin strengthens the outer layer of your skin, which can:

- Make your skin feel more comfortable
- Reduce your skin's sensitivity
- Lessen your risk of developing a skin infection
- Prevent dry skin from worsening

When dry skin worsens, it can cause extremely itchy skin and other symptoms. See what else to look out for: [Dry skin: Symptoms](#)

Images

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