



Lock in skin's hydration during winter months

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Our bodies might be covered from head to toe in hats, scarves, sweaters, mittens and boots.

But this is the time of year when skin needs more maintenance and care than ever.

Chapped lips, cracked hands and dry, itchy arms and legs all are signs that winter has officially arrived.

"In the winter, the low temperatures and low humidity leads to drier air," said Dr. Amy Derick, a Barrington-based dermatologist. "Our heaters force dry air through vents. Basically, this strips the skin of moisture and oils. If the skin is stripped of its oils, it doesn't really have a protective barrier anymore."

You don't have to suffer during cooler months. A trip to the spa, dermatologist or even the skin-care aisle at the local drug store offer great benefits.

Over-the-counter skin remedies

Derick said she recommends that patients have humidifiers in their homes. She also suggests using fragrance-free laundry detergents and cutting down on those long, hot baths during the winter.

"Hot baths are very tempting in the wintertime," Derick said. "That really dries out the skin."

Instead, bathe briefly in lukewarm water or take showers, she said.

And speaking of showers, afterward is the best time to apply lotion and moisturizers.

"It's because of those little droplets of water," Derick said. "When you put moisturizer over the top of those, it locks them in."

The best moisturizers to use this time of year are ones that come in jars or tubes. Products in pump



bottles tend to be thinned out, Derick said.

When combating chapped lips, Derick said to forget all those popular menthol-flavored balms.

"They make the lips more chapped," she said. "Just put some Vaseline on your lips."

In fact, Derick said, Vaseline can be used on other parts of the body plagued by dry skin.

"Vaseline is fine, just don't put it on your face," Derick said. "It's good for sensitive skin because it doesn't contain a lot of

fragrance and additives. And it's sticky and goopy which allows moisture to be trapped in the skin."

Spa treatments

January is the perfect time to treat yourself to a spa day after all the shopping and family gathering stress in December. Jessica Barber, an aesthetician at Bladez Salon in Algonquin, recommends the "oxygenation facial" or the "pumice peel facial." The oxygenation facial provides vitamins and minerals to the skin, as well as much-needed hydration. As a bonus, Barber said, the facial helps to eliminate fine lines.

"It's going to help open up everything," Barber said. "When your skin is breathing, it allows moisture to get in."

The pumice peel facial also offers anti-aging benefits, Barber said, and rids the skin of dead cells.

"That one is going to really brighten and clean up the face," she said.

Bladez also offers a number of relaxing body wraps, including the "herbology body wrap," which Barber recommends this time of year.

"It's like a heated thermal cocoon," Barber said. "You come out, and your skin is fresh and alive."

Barber said the salon also can custom-blend moisturizers for clients. Vitamin K is a crucial ingredient in moisturizers because it brightens the skin, she said.

Paraffin dips on the hands can work well for winter skin, said Denise Croft, licensed medical aesthetician and laser technician at Dermatique Laser and Skin in Geneva. Near Valentine's Day, Croft said, the chocolate paraffin dips are popular.

"You lose a lot of moisture," Croft said. "It's important to take care of your skin all year round."

Don't forget the sunblock

What's the most common mistake when it comes to winter skin care? Experts say that many people neglect to put on sunblock. But the risk of sunburn exists whether it's 90 degrees and sunny or 20 degrees and cloudy, Derick said.

"The UV light reflects off the snow," Derick said. "Sometimes you can get a double dose."

Barber recommends using sunblock year round that has an SPF of 30 or higher.

"People forget that the sun is out this time of year," she said. "UV rays still come through when it's

cloudy.”

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