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Dry Skin Information Guide

Dry skin results from the skin's inability to hold or concentrate water. Several factors contribute to the ability of the skin to maintain its water content. Numerous molecules and proteins contained within the cells that make up the skin hold or lock the water inside of these cells. In addition, the natural fats and oils that are secreted by glands onto the skin serve to protect the delicate skin cells from the environment and the loss of water through evaporation.

The exact structure of the chemicals and proteins contained in the cells of the skin is determined by genetics and there is some variation among people concerning the exact structure of these molecules and proteins. As a result some people have a more difficult time maintaining the water concentration in the skin cells.

The natural oils and fats on the skin are removed with washing. Harsh soaps such as Ivory, Irish Spring, Zest, Coast, etc...remove these fats and oils and leave the skin exposed to the environment, ultimately resulting in loss of water in the skin.

More water is lost from the skin when surrounding environment is cold and dry, such as during the winter in Chicago.

Steps to take to protect your skin and minimize dry, itchy, irritated skin:

1. Use mild, super fatty soap, such as Dove, Oil of Olay, Lever 2000, or Tone.
2. Take luke-warm showers or baths and keep them short. Hot water damages the skin. Therefore redirect water from shower to the floor and stand away from direct water contact.
3. Use a good quality moisturizing cream to coat the body immediately after bathing or showering, such as Vanicream, Cetaphil Cream, Eucerin Cream. Lotions are not thick enough to offer protection against water loss. A light, non-greasy moisturizing cream as mentioned above will offer maximum protection.
4. Consider installing a whole house humidifier to your heating system, or using a humidifier in the bedroom at night to add moisture to the air, which decreased loss of water from the skin.
5. If any area of the skin becomes red or irritated, try applying plain Vaseline ointment or Aquaphor ointment to the area twice a day, especially at night before bed.

6. Change your detergent to one without any allergenic ingredients, such as ALL FREE. Discontinue the use of BLEACH and FABRIC SOFTENER.
7. Return to see the doctor at any time the above recommendations do not relieve your dry or irritated skin.