

Skin Care Q & A: Choosing the right moisturizer to protect your skin

Q: My skin is so dry, what should I look for when choosing a moisturizer? Aren't they all the same?

A: The wide selection of moisturizers on the shelves today does make choosing difficult.

They can all work to some extent to provide a barrier preventing moisture loss from the skin or deliver a humidifying effect, but some may be nicer to use than others. Formulations all contain water and oil in various percentages, and range from tried-and-true petroleum jelly (which is 95% oil and the most effective at reducing water loss through the skin) – to milk (historically associated with Cleopatra and her personal bathing habits), which is mostly water, although it can help humidify and soften the skin because of the lactic acid content. The downside of these two extremes is the sticky, greasy feel of petrolatum and the odour or a possible allergic reaction to milk.

Fortunately, modern technology has recently enabled chemists to create advanced, more effective formulations resulting in emulsions of oil, water and other ingredients that resemble the natural structure of the skin. These are called “new generation” moisturizers.

Healthy skin has a protective outer layer that keeps moisture in and harmful elements, such as dirt and bacteria, out. It is made up of stacked proteins surrounded by naturally occurring oils, called lipids. When this outer layer is damaged, the lipids are lost and moisture escapes, resulting in dry, irritated skin. How can you regenerate this protective layer? Regular use of a new generation

moisturizer, such as Impruv Cream, which contains lipids similar to those found in the skin, can help restructure your skin's protective outer layer and prevent further moisture loss.

What to look for in a moisturizer
Most dermatologists will tell patients who suffer from severely dry or itchy skin to select a moisturizer that is free of fragrances, preservatives, and dyes and which is described on the label as “hypoallergenic”. If the label says it is non-stinging, and non-irritating, this is a plus.

It is a given that any health professional will tell you that a good moisturizer should first of all be effective, providing fast relief from dry itchy skin by hydrating it. This means it should be designed to penetrate deep into the outer skin layer, to minimize water loss, replenish the skin's natural lipid (or oil) barrier and leave you feeling silky smooth.

Do's and don'ts for dry skin

It is only common sense to avoid hot showers, scrubbing your skin, extremes of temperature, or high winds and too much sun.

You can protect yourself by wearing utility gloves for many day to day activities, and avoiding cleaning products containing abrasive chemicals.

A must – drink plenty of water – your body's internal reservoir is your best skin moisturizer!

If you have severely dry skin which persists despite everything you have tried, the best thing to do is ask your physician about available treatments.

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Canadian winter brings dry skin. Which moisturizer to choose?

Climate change dramatically affects our skin. When winter comes, the humidity level drops along with the temperature, so we turn up the thermostat in our homes, take hot baths and showers, and add layers of clothes. When our skin becomes dry, it loses its elasticity and probably starts to itch. Severely dry skin can be stubborn, and selecting the right cream or lotion is a challenge.

Healthy skin is normally protected from dryness thanks to its Natural Moisturizing Factor, made up of oils our body produces, known as lipids. Our body also supplies water from the inside out, to keep the top layer moisturized, smooth and supple.

The outer layer of healthy skin acts as a barrier and protects us from any number of harmful elements in the environment. Dry conditions cause the cells on the top of the skin to shrink,

and humidity/moisture escapes, raising the risk of sensitive skin, contact dermatitis, or irritation due to use of harsh chemicals, and even infection.

More than 20 per cent of the population suffer from severely dry skin. The majority will seek relief by using a moisturizer. But, with so many choices on the pharmacy shelf, how do you make an informed choice? One moisturizer with an advanced formulation newly available in Canada is called Impruv, with derma membrane structure for advanced moisturizing, specifically created to closely resemble the oils we naturally produce which help keep our skin smooth and supple.

What to look for in a moisturizer?

Dermatologists say it should be:

- Effective in hydrating the skin to prevent water loss

What causes dry skin?

(NC)—About one in five people suffer dry skin on an ongoing basis. Others may find that they have a problem when the season changes. When skin loses the ability to retain moisture, it may be due to:

- Dry air, over-heating, air conditioning or climate
- Taking hot showers, or washing with hot water
- Over-active cleansing with soaps and gels
- Skin care products containing alcohol
- Exposure to outdoor elements, wind, cold air, sun
- Dehydration – (note - drink plenty of fluids, skin is moisturized from within)
- Aging
- Medical treatments, dialysis, radiation
- Conditions such as eczema, diabetes

New generation moisturizers

Studies have shown that using new generation moisturizers can help replenish the lost lipid (or oil) content of the skin

and restructure the damaged layer, to prevent moisture loss. If you have a dry skin problem, ask your doctor or pharmacist to recommend a new generation moisturizer, and see how it works for you. One advanced moisturizing product recently introduced to the Canadian market for dry, sensitive skin is called Impruv. It has most of the properties dermatologists recommend because it has a unique derma membrane structure and ingredients which resemble the skin's own. It is hypoallergenic, works fast to hydrate the skin and leaves it feeling silky smooth.

What can you do about dry skin?

A moisturizer can help to dramatically improve itchy, dry or cracked and sensitive skin. In severe cases, a physician will prescribe a treatment and recommend that you also use a moisturizer on a regular basis. It is important to remember:

- Take warm rather than hot showers or baths.



Photo available at www.gettyimages.com

- An emollient, to make skin smooth and supple
- An aid in duplicating the skin's natural ability to retain moisture
- Cosmetically appealing, pleasant to use
- Suitable for sensitive skin, hypoallergenic, fragrance free, nonsensitizing
- Absorbed rapidly, providing immediate relief, without feeling sticky.

- News Canada

- Use mild cleansers without perfumes, dyes, or antibacterials
- Don't scrub or scratch the skin
- Wear gloves when working with detergents or household cleansers
- Drink plenty of water
- Use a humidifier in winter
- Avoid metals which cause a skin reaction
- Use fragrance-free fabric softeners and laundry detergents
- Use a non-irritating, hypoallergenic moisturizer, one that mimics the skin's natural moisture barrier
- Ask your pharmacist about the latest improvement in moisturizers containing a derma membrane structure similar to your skin (or, for dry sensitive skin).

It is only common sense to take care of your skin, as it is your natural protection against the environment and effectively keeps you healthy. However, if your skin condition does not improve, or worsens, it is important to see your doctor for an appropriate course of treatment.

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