



With knowledge, the right products and a skincare routine, Canadians can keep their skin healthy year-round

# Say goodbye to dry winter skin

By Dr. Julia Carroll

**A**s Canadians, we are proud of our winter weather and we embrace our outdoor lifestyle – from hockey to skiing, snowshoeing to ice skating. Unfortunately, as I see in my practice every day, our skin is not always on board with our lifestyle.

As the temperature drops so does the humidity in the air. The environment constantly pulls moisture away from your skin surface, and if the air is particularly dry, more moisture gets pulled from your skin. In addition, the heating systems we use in our cars, at work and at home can also dry out our skin. As our skin is exposed to these harsh, drying elements, micro-cracks develop in the skin.

The outer layer of our skin, the stratum corneum, is designed as a bricks and mortar system with the skin cells being the bricks and the mortar being lipids between the skin cells. When micro-cracks appear in the skin, these lipids leak from the skin. This causes the skin to dry out even further, causing even more lipids to spill from the skin. As a result, dry skin causes even drier skin.

There can be some long-term consequences of not taking care of your skin in the winter. Dry skin can turn into eczema, also known as dermatitis, which appears as itchy red patches of

skin. Eczema can affect any part of the body, but is commonly found on the hands, trunk and eyelids. In its most severe forms eczema can cause discomfort, sleepless nights and even scarring from scratching. People with eczema are also more susceptible to skin infections.

There are many ways to stop the dry skin cycle. I recommend that all my patients add a humidifier to their bedroom. When showering, be sure to keep the shower short and keep the water temperature turned down. Skip the soap. Instead, opt for a cleanser with ceramides, which

## ! Lip care

Keeping lips hydrated is important at all times, but more so during the colder months. It's recommended to use a hydrating lip balm or a moisturizing lipstick, which ideally contain sun protection.

Chapped lips require meticulous care to heal. Don't lick them – the acidity of saliva does nothing but increase irritation. It's crucial to avoid pulling or rubbing the irritated skin to try and exfoliate the dry, chapped lips.

can help replenish the skin's natural barrier. After the shower, pat dry with a towel and then apply a moisturizer when you are still slightly damp. This will lock moisture into the skin. For those of you with limited time, there are new spray-on moisturizing products that are very convenient for any season.

When it comes to winter there are a few differences in skincare for men and women. Shaving an already dry face can wreak havoc on a man's skin. To avoid a chapped winter face, wash with a soap-free cleanser, skip the toner and consider shaving with a moisturizing lotion.

Women sometimes have the opposite situation with their legs. In the depths of winter, many women cut back on shaving their legs, but this can make them dryer as shaving also exfoliates. To keep legs from drying out in the winter, I suggest using a cleansing oil, which can be applied in the shower to keep skin hydrated.

With a bit of knowledge, the right products and a skincare routine, Canadians can embrace the winter season and keep their skin healthy. ■

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## shaving 101

As much as shaving is a very common hair removal method, it's still important to know the basics before getting started.

- 1 Start with a sharp blade. A dull blade can mean more pulling on the skin and a greater risk of pesky ingrown hairs that can sometimes result in infection.
- 2 Use a shaving cream or gel to moisturize and protect against nicks and cuts.
- 3 Be sure to use warm water since hot water can leach moisture from the skin.
- 4 Pat skin dry with a clean towel.
- 5 Apply a moisturizer to slightly damp skin and, ta-da, you're ready to go!