



Dry skin

The skin naturally becomes drier with age. The body produces less oil and moisture. The skin also becomes thinner and less elastic. Dry skin is not a serious health risk. With self-care, it can be easily managed. When it is a symptom of a health condition, treating the condition treats the dry skin.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Itchy skin. The skin can be red from scratching it.
- Chapped skin
- Skin that cracks, peels, and/or flakes

CAUSES, RISK FACTORS & CARE

- Aging
- Cold winter weather
- Sun damage
- Dry air or heat
- Harsh skin products
- Washing the skin often
- Some medications
- Allergies
- An underactive thyroid gland; diabetes; and/or kidney disease
- Other skin conditions, such as psoriasis



SELF-CARE / PREVENTION

- Drink 8 or more glasses of water a day.
- Moisturize your skin daily and after washing your hands.
- Don't overexpose your skin to water, such as with washing dishes. Wear rubber gloves when you wash dishes.
- Take a shower instead of a bath. Use warm (not hot) water. Apply a moisturizer that contains lanolin, ceramides, or hyaluronic acid while your skin is damp.
- If you prefer to bathe, bathe for only 15 to 20 minutes in lukewarm water. Pat yourself dry. Do not rub.
- Use a washcloth instead of soaping the skin directly.
- Use a gentle cleanser or allergen-free soap, avoid deodorant, medicated, or alkaline soaps.
- Don't use moisturizers with fragrances, preservatives, or alcohol.
- Use a night cream for the face.
- Stay out of the strong sun.
- Do not use tanning salons or sun lamps.
- Use a broad spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.
- Avoid scratching your skin.
- Rinse and moisturize after swimming, especially if you swim in a heavily chlorinated pool.





CONTACT DOCTOR WHEN

- You have any of these problems with dry skin:
 - Deep cracks on the hands or feet
 - Tight, shiny, or hardened skin
 - Itchy skin areas that are raised, have red borders, and are covered with large white or silver-white scales
- You have signs of an infection (fever; increased redness, swelling, pain, or tenderness; pus; blisters; red streaks from the affected area).
- You have diabetes and the dry skin is troublesome or it has cracked, which can be a portal for infection.
- You have symptoms of low thyroid.
- You have dry skin without a rash and you itch all over.
- You have a dry scaly patch that has not healed for over a month. This should be evaluated for skin cancer.
- Severe itching keeps you from sleeping.
- Self-care brings no relief.