Dry Skin Care

Helpful tips

What causes dry skin?
Dry skin can be caused by:

- Low-humidity indoor heat
- Cold winter air
- Air conditioning
- Too much sun or wind
- Harsh soaps or detergents
- Natural aging

Tips
These tips will help keep your skin from drying out:

Bathing

- **Bathe less often.** Most people do not need to bathe every day. Even though water soaks into your skin during a bath or shower, the water, heat, and soap actually remove protective oils from your skin. This can cause dry, itchy skin later.
- **Take shorter, cooler baths and showers.** Do not take long baths or showers, and do not use very hot water.
- **Use less soap.** You do not have to use soap on all your skin when you bathe. Use soap only in “hairy areas” (under your arms and around your anus and genital area).
- **Use mild soap.** When you use soap, use Dove, Camay, Basis, or Cetaphil bar soap. Do not use liquid soap. Dove is a good choice because it does not cost a lot, you can find it in many stores, and it is one of the mildest soaps you can buy.
- **Pat instead of rubbing yourself dry.** Right after bathing, pat your skin dry with a clean towel.
- **Use a skin lubricant.** Apply ointment, cream, or lotion to moisten your skin after you have bathed and patted your skin dry.
Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Dermatology Center: 206-598-5065

---

Using Skin Lubricants

Use only the amount of skin lubricant that you can easily rub into your skin. It should not take long for your skin to absorb it. There should not be a greasy residue afterward. If there is, use less next time.

Everyone is different. What suits you may not work for someone else. The best skin lubricant is the one you like the best, because you are more likely to use it.

To find the best product for you:

- Buy several skin lubricants and compare them to each other. Use one on the left side of your body and a different one on the right side.
- After 2 or 3 weeks, decide which one you like best, and discard the other.
- Try the comparison again with a different product until you have found the one you are most happy with.

Types of Skin Lubricants

There are many types of skin lubricants to choose from. You can buy them at most drugstores or grocery stores.

**Lotions**

Lotions are the mildest treatment for dry skin. They are usually tried first. Some brands of lotion are:

- Cetaphil
- Keri
- Neutrogena body emulsion
- CeraVe
- Lubriderm
- Pen-Kera
- Curel
- Moisturel
- DML

**Creams**

Creams are a bit more greasy, but they are usually more effective than lotions for treating dry skin. Try these creams:

- Eucerin
- Cetaphil
- CeraVe

**Ointments**

Ointments are even greasier and more effective than creams. They are easiest to apply right after a shower or bath, when your skin is still moist. You will need much less ointment when you put it on moist skin and your skin will be less greasy than if you put it on dry skin.

Two ointments to try are:

- Aquaphor
- Vaseline (the “ultimate” lubricant)