

Winter wonderland? Not for your skin

January 23 2023, by Cara Murez



Winter is no friend to the body's delicate skin, but an expert offers three key tips: moisturize, moisturize, moisturize.

"It's pretty intuitive, but it bears repeating," said dermatologist [Dr. David Pearson](#), an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota Medical School, in Minneapolis. "The environment treats our skin differently in the winter, and that means we may have to change our behaviors to acclimate."

As temperatures and [humidity levels](#) drop, your skin loses moisture, Pearson explained in a university news release. This is especially true in a cold, dry state like Minnesota.

To help hydrate [winter](#) skin, Pearson recommends a thick moisturizing cream that has to be scooped out of a jar or squeezed out of a tube, rather than something thin that comes through a pump.

"I don't like a lot of additives, perfumes, scents, etc.—keep it simple," Pearson said.

When skin dries out, its ability to protect you from external allergens and infections is compromised. "Ceramides may be helpful in restoring the skin barrier, so those can be a good ingredient to look for," he added.

Pearson said some data suggests that humidifiers may also help, but likely less so than moisturizer.

When washing, use a gentle soap and keep up your summer sunscreen routine. Even if you're bundled up, a fair amount of UV light is reflected from the snow, Pearson said. "Prolonged exposure through [outdoor activities](#) (or long drives) can add up," he explained.

Winter is often more difficult for people who have eczema, especially when it's on their hands, Pearson noted. Eczema causes dry, itchy and red skin.

In [cold weather](#), Pearson also sees vascular conditions called Raynaud's and pernio, because he specializes in autoimmune connective tissue diseases. Symptoms can occur with cold exposure.

"Raynaud's is the rapid onset of white or blue discoloration of the fingers and/or toes from cold exposure due to constriction of blood vessels," he explained. "Pernio is the delayed onset of tender pink bumps on the fingers and toes 1 to 2 days after [cold exposure](#)."

In very cold regions, frostbite, which can happen when skin temperature reaches 28° Fahrenheit or below, is another danger. That only takes 30 minutes in 0° F weather.

"Our [skin](#) isn't physiologically equipped for unprotected, [prolonged exposure](#) to these temperatures, so be sure to put on a warm coat and hat when you're going outside," Pearson advised.

More information: The American Academy of Dermatology Association offers more [winter](#) skin-care tips.

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Citation: Winter wonderland? Not for your skin (2023, January 23) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-01-winter-wonderland-skin.html>

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