

Feeding your skin to care for winter dryness and redness

by Christina Choi Jan 24, 2012



Chicago winters can be brutal, leaving your skin feeling dry and itchy all over.

You may even suffer from extreme dryness that results in scaling, cracking and eczema, a chronic skin disorder that involves inflammation or irritation.

“The relative humidity in the air plummets in the winter,” resulting in flyaway hair or clothing that clings to the skin, said **Christine Palumbo**, a registered Naperville dietician.

The combination of freezing temperatures and dry indoor heat can draw the moisture out of the skin, **Palumbo** said.

Usually dermatologists recommend topical treatments to care for chapped and wind-burned complexions, but did you know what you eat and drink could directly impact your skin?

Here are some expert dietary recommendations to keep a healthy glow and to battle against dryness.

Stay hydrated. Dr. Jessica Wu, a Los Angeles dermatologist and author of “Feed Your Face,” said the skin loses up to 25 percent more water in the winter than in the summer, due to wind and indoor heating. “You might not be that thirsty because you’re spending less time outdoors and you don’t feel as warm, but it’s important to drink water,” Wu said. She recommends an increase in fluids by drinking water, juice, soup and decaffeinated tea.

Essential Fatty Acids. When skin is looking dull and feeling dry this season, make sure you have a diet that includes natural oils. “The skin requires fatty acids, ceramides and squalene to maintain its moisture producing and protective capabilities,” said Dr. Carolyn Jacob, dermatologist and director of Chicago Cosmetic Surgery and Dermatology on West Kinzie Street. She suggests consuming olives and olive oil as great ways to replenish the skin, so dress a salad or finish off some steamed vegetables with a drizzle of olive oil. Salmon and walnuts contain omega-3 fatty acids, which are anti-inflammatory, to treat itchiness and redness in people who have sensitive skin.

Try zinc. Dr. Wu suggests that feeding your skin with foods that are high in zinc might help with redness and itching. Some studies showed that having a concentration in zinc has anti-inflammatory properties to help dry skin, Wu said. Some examples include lean red meat, lentils, kidney beans and oysters.



Protect with antioxidants. Antioxidants, such as Vitamin C, can prove to be very useful and protect against free radical damage that can cause skin damage and signs of aging. “Enjoy the wonderful citrus that is in season right now,” **Palumbo** said. She recommends ruby-red grapefruits, oranges, tangerines and blood oranges, which are all rich sources of Vitamin C that taste delicious and help your skin at the same time.

Avoid diuretics, white carbohydrates and dairy. Watch the caffeinated beverages and alcohol that can increase the excretion of water from the body, Wu said.

For those with itchy skin or rashes, Wu recommends avoiding dairy and white carbohydrates such as bread, pasta, rice and sugar because those can be inflammatory to the skin.

With these expert tips to treat your skin from the inside out, redness and itchiness can be kept at bay and replaced with softness and a healthy glow.

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