



Dry Skin

Dry skin is a very common problem with symptoms ranging from mild to severe. The climate in central Illinois and specifically Champaign-Urbana makes dry skin symptoms more severe, especially for our students who come from more humid geographical areas. Winter is especially drying here due to high wind (with nothing to block it), cold dry air, and indoor heating systems that can substantially dry indoor air.

Dry skin can affect any part of the body, as the only significant oil glands we have are on the "T-zone" of the central face, armpits, and groin. Arms and legs are most frequently affected. The most common symptom is itching, which can be mildly annoying to severely intense, often disturbing sleep. The most severe form of dry skin is called Nummular Eczema (comes from Nummus meaning coin-shaped). It appears as circular pink to red patches of dry, rough, and flaky skin on the arms and legs, primarily, or the trunk. The mid-back between the shoulderblades is often affected by both dry skin and Nummular Eczema. This area is also the most difficult area for a person to reach with lotion.

Symptoms of any other skin condition are often worsened by dry skin.

Things you can do to help your skin:

- Decrease the frequency of showering.
- Decrease the length/duration of the shower to five minutes.
- Turn down the temperature of the shower water.
- Wash with your hands and fingers instead of a scrubbie or washcloth.
- Use a mild bar soap such as Dove, Purpose, Caresse, Lever 2000, or Oil of Olay. Any liquid soap is more drying to your skin than a bar of the same soap. Shower gels, glycerin soap, deodorant soap, and ivory are the harshest for dry skin.
- Always use moisturizing lotion after bathing, while skin is still damp but not drippy wet. The drier your skin is, the heavier your moisturizer should be.
- Eucerin lotion or cream is good to start with for very dry skin and may be used as often as needed, as well as after bathing.
- Lighter lotions such as Moisturel, Curel, Lubriderm, Vaseline Intensive Care, Nivea, or NutriDerm spread more easily and may be used for less severe dry skin or in combination with Eucerin after the shower.
- A cool-mist vaporizer in the bedroom may add moisture to the air and your skin during the winter when the heat is on.

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>