

Skin saviour

Rough, dry, itchy and flaky skin are often the confidence-crushing hallmarks of wintertime. But, thankfully, they don't have to be. TARA THORNE explores five natural skin solutions to restore your skin's luminous glory.

1 HYDRATION

Change bathing habits

It's important to reduce the temperature of your showers and baths during winter because hot water removes the skin's natural oils. Only bathe once a day for five to 10 minutes. Any longer than this will dry your skin out. It's also a good idea to limit your use of body washes that contain harsh chemicals or soaps.

Drink more water

One of the best things you can do for your skin is to drink more water. Water helps carry nutrients through the body as well as flush toxins out. During winter, when the air is drier, water becomes even more crucial for hydration, so be sure to keep a water bottle by your side at all times.

2 SLIP SLOP SLAP

Don't forget sunscreen

Think sunscreen is only necessary during summertime? Think again. During the winter months, when the days are cooler and often more overcast, UV radiation can still be quite high. Before heading outside, slap on some sunscreen. Avoid sunscreens that contain synthetic

vitamin A, known as retinyl palmitate. This ingredient has been implicated in speeding up the development of skin tumors and lesions. Also avoid the chemical oxybenzone, which has been linked to allergies, hormone disruption and cell damage. And don't rely on a moisturiser that boasts an SPF as these rarely give you the protection you require.

Moisturise

A good moisturiser is important to prevent dry skin. Moisturisers act as a barrier between your skin and the cold winter elements. Apply as soon as you've finished showering while your skin is still damp. This will help lock in moisture. And use a humidifier when you're inside to combat the drying affects of heated air.

3 DIET

Ditch the junk

Our skin responds to treatments topically as well as from our diet so eating a diet high in nutrients is essential for skin health. Think fresh fruits and vegetables, in particular dark leafy greens, beets, cruciferous vegetables, sweet potatoes and carrots as well as whole grains and legumes. Fibre, which

is only found in plant foods, is very important as it helps to detox the colon, which prevents an accumulation of toxins that can cause skin problems.

Essential fatty acids

Omega-6 and omega-3 EFAs are crucial for skin health. EFAs influence the inflammatory response in the skin and a deficiency of these fats can result in increased dryness. During wintertime it's imperative to get enough of these healthy fats into your diet. Some top food sources of EFAs include fish or algae oil, nuts (be aware, some nuts may not be suitable for eczema sufferers), avocado, flax, chia, pumpkin seeds and wheat germ.

Protein

Protein contains vital amino acids required for tissue building and cell turnover. Adequate protein is important, but this doesn't mean you have to load up on animal protein, which is pro-inflammatory and can exacerbate skin conditions. There are plenty of healthy, plant-based proteins, which come with the added benefit of reducing inflammation. Some complete plant-based protein sources include tofu, quinoa, buckwheat, chia, hemp seeds and plant-based protein powders.



4 AVOID IRRITATION

Rosacea

Rosacea is an inflammatory neurovascular skin disorder characterised by redness and acne-like bumps. It most commonly affects the face and eyes. Rosacea can be triggered by cold and wind, quick transitions between hot and cold temperatures, heaters, fires and hot baths or showers. Common foods that can aggravate rosacea include yoghurt, sour cream, cheese, chocolate, vanilla, soy, yeast extracts, vinegar, eggplant, avocado, spinach, beans, citrus, tomatoes, bananas, raisins and figs. It's best to avoid stimulants such as tea and coffee, drink lots of water, and avoid bad fats. Increase dark leafy greens and other high-fibre foods and supplement with probiotics, essential fatty acids (EFAs) and vitamins A, C and E.

Atopic eczema

Atopic eczema, also called atopic dermatitis, is an inflammatory skin condition affecting one in three Australasians. It causes skin to swell and become red, dry, scaly and itchy. People who suffer from eczema have a compromised skin barrier, so moisturising two to three times per day is imperative. In winter, low humidity, air conditioning,

long and hot baths or showers, wool jumpers and synthetic fibres can aggravate this condition. So too can harsh soaps, perfumes, makeup and chlorine. Flare-ups can also be triggered by food allergens such as wheat, dairy, soy, chocolate, citrus, eggs, peanuts, and chemical food additives, preservatives and colourings. Include plenty of EFAs in your diet and increase dark leafy vegetables. Emerging research is showing that vegetarian diets might also be beneficial. Supplement with probiotics, zinc and vitamins A, C and E and D3.

Psoriasis

Psoriasis is an inflammatory skin condition characterised by patches of red skin covered in silvery scales. It occurs when skin cells turn over before they have a chance to mature – essentially skin growing too fast. It's most common on elbows and knees but can occur anywhere on the body. Moisturising daily is essential to maintain hydration and act as a barrier against the elements. Aloe vera gel is a natural moisturiser that can help. Avoid excess alcohol, reduce bad fats and take fish oil and vitamin D as these supplements have been shown to be beneficial in treating psoriasis. Others you can try include zinc, vitamins A and E, and B vitamins.

Turmeric is a powerful anti-inflammatory which can also be helpful, as can cayenne pepper, which can reduce inflammation, redness and scaling. Additionally, glutathione – a powerful antioxidant – can inhibit the growth of psoriasis.

5 SUPPLEMENT

Zinc

Zinc aids the body's healing process and can be helpful for many skin disorders. The best food sources of zinc include fish and seafood, pumpkin seeds, soybeans, eggs, legumes, whole grains, wheat germ, wheat bran and nuts. Take 15 to 40 mg per day but don't use long term as this can upset your copper levels.

Herbs

Some of the best herbs for maintaining skin health include yellow dock, horsetail, licorice root, parsley, garlic, burdock root and milk thistle. Many of these work on purifying the liver and blood, which greatly benefits skin health. Look for them as herbal teas, powdered supplements or tinctures. **NH**

Always consult your doctor before taking supplements or altering medication.