

Skin care advice offered on how to avoid winter's damaging effects

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Oh, the weather outside is frightful ... brutal winter weather, and the cold temperatures and icy winds that accompany it, doesn't just impact immune systems or emotional well-being, it often devastates skin, causing roughness, redness, tightening, cracking and peeling.

Dry, flaky, tight, itchy skin doesn't have to be a cruel side effect of winter, according to Shauna Birdsall, ND, FABNO, director of Naturopathic Medicine at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America® Western Regional Medical Center.

According to Birdsall, there are some simple tips anyone can integrate into their overall wellness program to ensure they keep healthy, beautiful skin all winter long. "Naturopathic medicine can offer holistic solutions that helps skin glow from the inside out," she said.

CTCA® is located in Arizona and is proud to serve patients throughout the state of Colorado and the Rocky Mountain region. CTCA develops a personalized treatment plan specific to each of its patients. In addition to providing cancer patients with access to the latest state-of-the-art technologies and conventional oncology treatment options, CTCA also offers integrative medicine to support patients with naturopathic medicine, nutrition, mind-body medicine, acupuncture, massage, physical therapy, occupational therapy and more.

A vital part of CTCA's integrative medicine treatment plan, naturopathic medicine uses evidence-based natural therapies to help patients both maintain and restore health.

"Naturopathic doctors take a 'whole person' approach to skin care that may help more than just your skin feel better," said Birdsall, who explains that a prescription for optimal winter skin care need not be expensive or time-consuming.

Tips from Birdsall and the integrative medicine team at CTCA to help attain and enjoy a more vibrant skin this winter include:

—Stay hydrated. Drinking enough water is crucial to beautiful skin. Think of water as an internal

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moisturizer. Dehydrated skin is less able to weather the dryness of winter and may even show tiny cracks and wrinkles.

—Exercise. Movement increases circulation, which helps bring more oxygen to skin cells and helps pump waste products out. Increasing blood flow makes skin look rosier, giving it a special glow. Don't make exercise too complicated. Go for a brisk walk, enjoy a winter hike, or even do some stretching or yoga. Any increase in breathing and movement will help.

—Eat well. Registered dietitians promote eating a well-balanced diet high in fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Antioxidants from brightly colored fruits and vegetables provide the nutrients needed to keep skin cells healthy and to fight free radicals. Eating the whole food provides more of the natural chemicals found in foods (called phytonutrients) than a multivitamin and has additional health benefits as well.

—Get enough rest. Sleep is the time for the body to undergo restoration. Ever notice how healthy skin looks after a good night's rest? Sleep is an essential time when the body can restore and repair skin.

—Increase intake of omega-3 fatty acids. Healthy eating guidelines include diets rich in cold water fish, such as salmon, as well as nuts and seeds. Omega-3 fatty acids have anti-inflammatory effects that can help improve skin's texture and appearance. Fish oil supplements may also help. Before taking a supplement, visit with a doctor or other qualified healthcare professional to ensure there are no concerns regarding interactions with current medications or other factors affecting health.

—Reconsider what soap is used. Antibacterial soaps can be very drying, particularly during harsh winter months. Consider a moisturizing bath soap instead. Use a gentle cleanser for the face. Wash hands frequently (to prevent winter colds, influenza and other viruses from spreading), but use a moisturizing lotion afterward as a barrier to prevent further drying and cracking.

—Re-evaluate the skin care products being used. Are they really meeting personal needs this winter? If skin doesn't look and feel good right now, perhaps using different products during the winter and summer months is necessary.

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While there are many effective skin care products, there are just as many that are hype or overrated. Spending a fortune on skin care is not necessary. The right products are the ones that are within budget and make skin feel good. Consider trying some new products for skin care. Natural food stores often carry skin care lines with less harmful chemicals that are healthier and better for the environment.

—Moisturize, moisturize, moisturize. Apply moisturizer in the morning. Consider a moisturizing foundation. Take a few minutes to wash the face with a gentle, non-drying cleanser at night and moisturize the face at night. Use a body lotion after bathing to moisturize the whole body.

—Protect skin from the sun. Many are not as conscious of the detrimental effects of sun exposure during the winter as are in the summer. Always apply sunscreen to any exposed skin when outdoors. Even when inside all day, apply sunscreen-containing moisturizer to the face, as it can still be exposed to the sun's harmful rays. This will also help maintain a more youthful appearance for a longer period of time, as ultraviolet radiation can hasten the aging process.

—Stop smoking! Besides being the single most important step to prevent cancer, it can also help skin. No amount of optimal skin care can override the detrimental effects of smoking. Stay away from secondhand smoke as much as possible, too.

From bright, sunny days to harsh, snowy conditions, the ever-changing winter season can be a challenge to maintaining beautiful skin. Making skin care a priority through a few careful choices can bring relief, and applying these tips all season long will lead to much healthier winter skin, from the inside out!

Learn more about Cancer Treatment Centers of America

Cancer Treatment Centers of America, Inc. is a national network of hospitals focusing on

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complex and advanced stage cancer. CTCA offers a comprehensive, fully integrated approach to cancer treatment and serves patients from all 50 states at facilities located in Atlanta, Ga., Chicago, Ill., Philadelphia, Pa., Phoenix, Ariz. and Tulsa, Okla.

Known for delivering the Mother Standard® of care and Patient Empowerment Medicine®, CTCA provides patients with information about cancer and their treatment options so they can control their treatment decisions. For more information about CTCA, go to www.cancercenter.com

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