

Winterizing Your Skin

Winter has finally arrived. It is the time of year when everyone starts complaining about dry, dull skin. The best way to sail through the winter months intact is to pay attention to your skin's environmental protection barrier, also called the lipid barrier. This top layer of skin protects you from extreme cold, harsh winds, and your skin's arch nemesis, the sun.



Unfortunately, as you age, you produce fewer and fewer lipids, and that means this much-needed protective barrier diminishes. The result: your skin gets drier, duller, and is more prone to wrinkles. Winter weather adds insult to injury. Following are four ways to support your skin's barrier function during the dry winter months:

1. **Cleanse....without stripping your skin**

If there was ever a time to use gentle cleansers, it's winter. Look for cleansers with natural oils, like green tea oil, in their list of ingredients so you can cleanse and lubricate simultaneously. Let go of your need for "squeaky clean" skin because cleansers with harsh sudsing agents ultimately do more damage than good, stripping your skin of its environmental protective barriers. Also be aware that long, hot showers can dry skin out further. If you are dealing with dry skin, taking short, lukewarm baths and showers can help your body retain its natural, skin-protecting oils.

2. **Replenish top layers of your skin with face oils**

Face oils are a key element for your winter skin care routine because they replenish the top layers of aging skin so that it can retain moisture and repel assaults from wind and cold. Even better, face oils penetrate past the epidermal barrier to deliver nutrients to deeper layers of the skin.

3. **Exfoliate....with caution**

There's no denying that a little cell-shedding now and again makes your skin look and feel better. But overdoing it creates sensitized, dry, dehydrated skin, which is the last thing you need during the cold dry winter months. Opt for more gentle exfoliators such as lactic acid, adzuki bean powder, or the more recent arrival, mushroom extract.

4. **Wear sunscreen religiously**

Just because the sun isn't out as long during the winter doesn't mean you can take a sunscreen break. Always choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects you from both UVA and UVB rays. Sunscreens with zinc oxide do an especially good job of repelling rays before they can enter the skin and wreak havoc. Wear sunscreen every day, from dawn to dusk, rain or shine, in hot or cold weather.