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Your guide to good health this winter

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Dealing with dry skin

Skin turns dry and itchy in winter because of the low air humidity. "The normally fine lines in the skin become more visible and the skin feels rough and flaky. Skin cracks easily too," says dermatologist Hema Pant of Kaya Skin Clinic. Dry skin occurs most commonly on the arms and legs, but can also affect the trunk of the body. Unless dry skin is treated, it may result in itching that is severe enough to interfere with sleep and other daily activities.

Repeated rubbing and scratching can produce areas of thickened, rough skin which may crack, especially in exposed areas like hands and feet. "Scratching dry skin may cause dermatitis which leads to red and inflamed skin. Bacterial infections may also set into these areas," says Dr Pant. Any skin problems you have will only be aggravated in winter.

Those suffering from genetic diseases like atopic dermatitis and people with hormone imbalances such as an underactive thyroid gland can also experience severe skin dryness which worsens in winter. Indoor heaters used in winter can also dry out skin excessively so limit their use to after a bath.

RX People with sensitive skin, or conditions like eczema or psoriasis should avoid wearing woollen or heavy synthetic fabrics directly against their skin. These can cause irritation from too much friction.

Wear a cotton layer against your skin and then cover up with woollens to protect against friction. Invest in a pot of Vaseline which is made up of a mixture of mineral oils, paraffin and microcrystalline waxes which seals moisture into the skin and is the best non sticky option which can be used all through out the year. Those with extra dry skin may find it useful to use some oil before their baths, and apply plenty of sunscreen before stepping outdoors during the day. This provides a protective layer that helps counter the impact of the extreme weather.