

Dry Skin

What causes dry skin?

Skin protects itself and stays moist with natural oils from oil glands in the skin. Soaps remove these oils and make the skin drier. Heat also causes the skin to lose moisture. You may find that your skin often gets dry and itchy in the winter from overheated, dry indoor air. Some fabrics (such as wool), antiperspirants, perfumes, soaps, and hot baths can further irritate dry skin.

Dry skin is a common problem, especially in older people because of changes in the skin from aging. As you get older you lose sweat glands and oil glands.

Sometimes dry skin is a symptom of illness or a side effect of medicine.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of dry skin include:

- Itching
- Flaking
- Peeling
- Scaling

These symptoms may cause you to scratch your skin more. Scratching can irritate the skin and the skin may get infected. Signs that an area of skin may be infected are redness, swelling, pain, pus, or unusual warmth.

What should I do about dry skin?

Here are some things you can try:

- Use moisturizers and lotions regularly. Always use lotions after washing your hands or bathing. Avoid lotions that are scented. Lotions containing lanolin (a natural oil) and no fragrances are less expensive and most effective.
- Avoid wearing rough fabrics that can irritate the skin, such as wool.
- Always shower or bathe right away after getting out of a pool or spa that has chlorine in it.
- When you bathe:
 - Use a mild moisturizing soap. Dermatologists often recommend Dove, Neutrogena, or Basis soaps.
 - Bathe less often. Too many baths or showers can actually make skin drier. Consider bathing just 1 or 2 times a week. Take sponge baths between showers as needed to keep clean.
 - Pat your skin dry with a soft towel. Do not rub your skin dry.
 - Apply moisturizer to moist skin after patting dry.
 - Do not use hot water. Use only warm water and do not regularly soak in a hot tub.

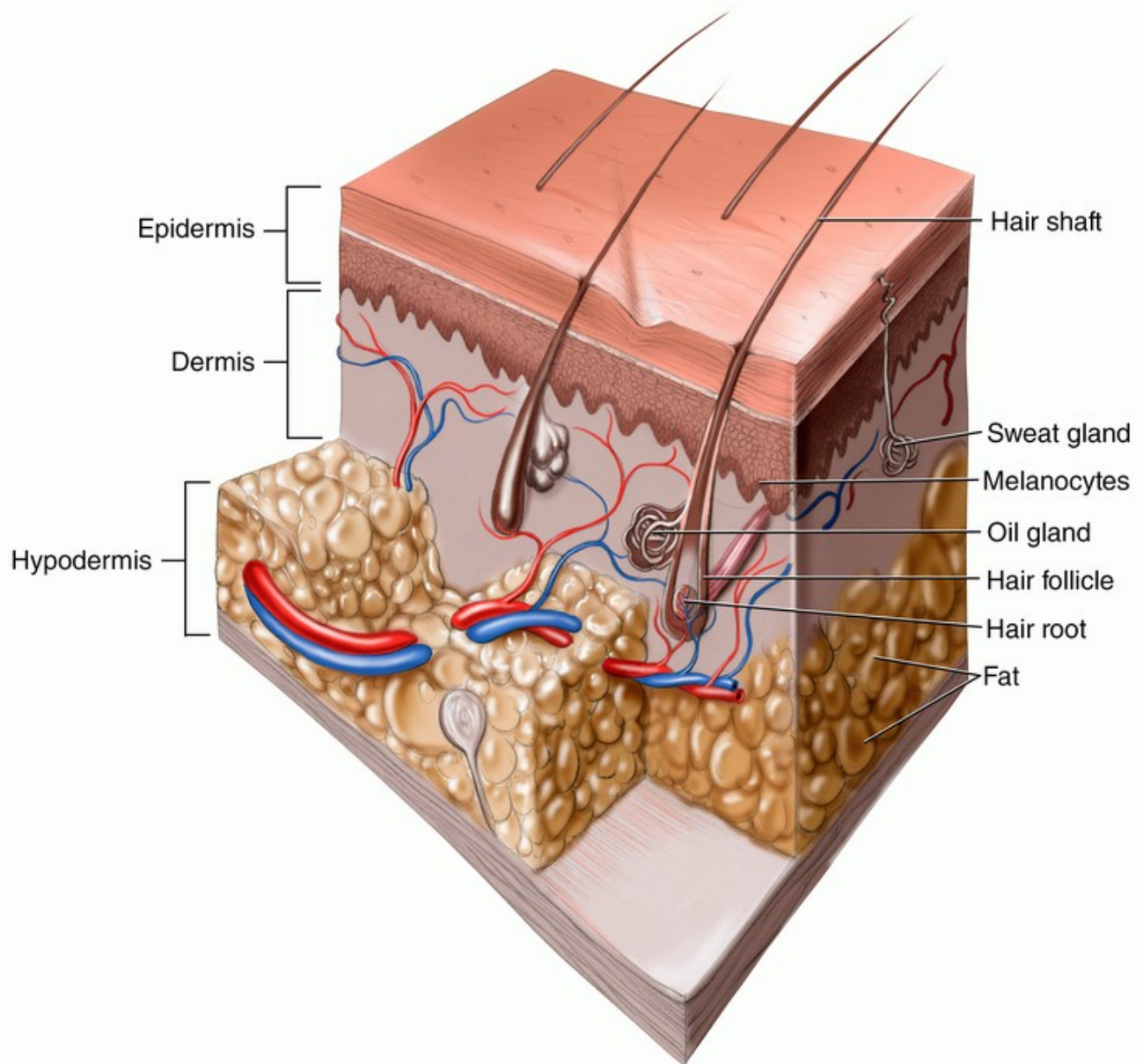
- Use a humidifier to raise the humidity level in your home, especially in the winter.
- Protect your hands with gloves when you wash dishes, garden, or do chores.

If these suggestions do not improve your dry skin, get advice from your healthcare provider. Your provider may do some tests or may refer you to a doctor who specializes in skin problems (a dermatologist).

Developed by RelayHealth.

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Skin: Cross Section



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