



Extension News Column

University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service, www.uaf.edu/ces/fycit@uaf.edu, 907-474-5211, FAX 907-474-6885

Contact: Debbie Carter, information officer, 907-474-5406, dscarter@alaska.edu

Author: Roxie Rodgers Dinstel, Tanana District Extension Faculty, HHFD

Skin is the largest organ in the body. And right now, our skin is under siege. In spite of the Chinook we had in January, we are still in the deep of winter. If cold weather and the dry air has affected your skin like mine, now is the time to employ some penny pinching ways to moisturize.

So why is it important? When skin is not properly moisturized, it flakes, leaving dry skin flakes on the inside of your clothes. Dry skin is unsightly and more importantly, it is itchy. When we itch, we scratch causing damage to the fresh, new skin.

How you bathe or shower is key to keeping skin moisturized. Follow these steps in conserving moisture:

- Cool it. Hot water is drying to the skin. So turn down the heat in the shower or bath.
- Shorten those showers. As nice as it feels to stand in the shower, it is better for your skin to take a short 5 or 6 minute shower.
- Use less soap. Soap, by its nature is drying. Use soap on only those parts of the body that need it. A water rinse may be all that the arms and legs need. Keep the soap for hands and feet.
- Use a vegetable based soap such a glycerin soap or use a mild soap. Keep the heavy fragrances and heavy cleansers for warmer weather.
- Pat dry after bathing or showering. The idea of scrubbing the water off your body with a towel is not only unnecessary, it will dry the skin. Just pat yourself dry and leave a little moisture on the skin. Then slather on a moisturizing lotion to keep that moisture in.

There are a million moisturizers, creams, and lotions out there that will add moisture and fragrance. However, if you are just adding moisture, opt for low cost options.

Petroleum jelly-One of my favorites has always been petroleum jelly. This thick, viscous product was discovered as oil field workers were drilling for oil because it kept gumming up the drilling. It adds moisture to hands and feet. I usually put the petroleum jelly on my feet, put on heavy cotton socks and go to bed. The next morning when I take my shower, the old, dry skin is soft and ready to scrub off. If hands are your problem, the same process works on hands, just use gloves to protect the sheets from the heavy duty grease.

Olive oil-Use olive oil just like petroleum jelly. It adds moisture for a low cost. One of the gifts I got for Christmas was a skin scrub made of olive oil and sugar. After your shower, use the scrub then just pat skin dry leaving the olive oil to moisturize the skin.

If you are buying a moisturizing lotion, remember that not everyone's skin is alike. A moisturizing lotion that works well for me, may not do the same for you. And our skin changes over time, which may change the effectiveness of the product. So the lesson is, buy small size products to see what works for you before investing in a product you may have to throw away. Pay attention to your skin to make sure the moisturizer is continuing to work for you.

Whatever works best for you, be sure to take care of your skin during this cold, dry time of year.