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The Dry Skin Guide

Whether it's weather-induced or a chronic issue, dry skin is compromised, less-healthy skin. Skin's supple, elastic natural state enables it to protect the entire body from invaders; when it's too dry, the skin's barrier function is affected, and pathogens can enter. But even less serious dryness can cause irritation, itchiness, and inflammation. And it doesn't just feel bad: Dry skin can look uneven, blotchy, and decidedly more wrinkled, as moisture plumps and smoothes the skin (albeit temporarily). It also doesn't reflect light in the same way as healthily hydrated skin.

Dry air is of course the enemy of dry skin, but so, counterintuitively, is water. Applied to the surface of the skin, water takes natural skin oils with it as it evaporates, causing... dryness. Overwashing can really exacerbate dry skin, and the hotter the water, the stronger the effect. (Hence the advice that is inexplicably offered about taking tepid baths—what person not in a tropical climate wants a tepid bath? But that's another story. Baths are only for the dry-skinned if they are fortified with lots of oil—which is, of course, no great burden.)

Surfactants—soaps, detergents, most anything that foams—compound the water-evaporating situation, breaking up and dispersing the skin's natural oils with extreme efficiency. On top of eliminating oil, surfactants can also irritate skin, further disrupting the barrier function.

In short, wash as little as you need to, and for as short a time as possible. For instance, if you cleanse your face at night, it shouldn't need re-cleansing in the morning—unless you've got very oily skin, not dry, skip morning cleansing altogether, and just start with face oil or moisturizer. Most people with dry skin don't need a toner step, either—unless they're not exfoliating at all, in which case the mild exfoliation from applying a toner might be worth it. Take short showers with non-surfactant cleansers—the jojoba, rosehip, and macadamia-nut oil-packed [Body Cleanser from Grown Alchemist](#) (\$28, goop.com) leaves your skin incredibly soft and moisturized, with the faint scent of neroli, rosemary, and tangerine. For showers, also consider an oil-intensive body scrub like the ones from Ila (made with [Himalayan sea salt and a blend of rich oils](#), \$78, goop.com) or Beautycounter (a mix of [brown sugar and nourishing natural oils](#), \$38, goop.com): The exfoliation helps bring healthy new cells to the surface, and the oils seal in the water from the shower, so you emerge pre-moisturized from the shower—some people find they don't need to apply lotion after.

Balms & Ointments

For the most seriously dry skin spots, a super-thick balm or ointment acts almost like a band-aid, sealing in moisture and allowing skin to heal. In a pinch, lip balm works well, as does pure coconut oil. For a decidedly more luxe balm experience, Shiva Rose makes something called [Glow Face Balm](#) (\$60, [goop.com](#)) that's packed with rose oil and melts into skin on contact. Connock London makes its [Wonder Balm](#) (\$40, [goop.com](#)) with kukui oil from Hawaii, used for centuries to treat dryness (it's even used on babies), along with monoi and cocoa butter.

The jauntily-packaged [Anchor Balm from Captain Blankenship](#) (\$20, [captainblankenship.com](#)) is ultra-thick and rich with almond oil, shea butter, and non-GMO vitamin E, plus antibacterial and antiviral lavender, tangerine, and geranium extracts.

For the most severe dry skin, there's a new, totally clean alternative to antibiotic ointments called [Dr. Rogers Restore](#) (\$30, [restoreointment.com](#)). Made with only two ingredients—plant-based glycerin and castor wax—it reduces dermatitis and inflammation in general and restores natural barrier function in skin. New York cosmetic dermatologist Dr. Paul Jarrod Frank has been using it in his practice for about a year: "I've always wanted a simple, natural alternative to antibiotic ointments, which have all kinds of stuff in them you don't need, especially around a wound or compromised spot in the skin," says Frank. "This works, and it's totally natural, petroleum- and allergen-free."



SHIVA ROSE GLOW
FACE BALM
goop, \$60



DR. ROGERS RESTORE
OINTMENT
RestoreOintment.com, \$30



CAPTAIN BLANKENSHIP
ANCHOR HAND & LIP BALM
Captain Blankenship, \$20