

# Skin Health Matters

## Skin Sores

### Dry Skin

Dry skin can result from wind, cold, dryness, heat or even genetics. Although it can occur at any time of the year, dry skin is usually prominent during colder months when humidity is low. In fact, outdoors, cold winds can actually remove water from your skin and heating systems can dry the air indoors.

Dry skin can be extremely itchy and the natural reaction is to scratch; but scratching or rubbing can further irritate your skin causing inflammation. In other words, scratching just makes it worse. This itch-scratch cycle is heightened during the winter and can be extremely frustrating, particularly at night when your body is at rest. Many people often have trouble sleeping because of this.

### Here are some simple things you can do:

- Bundle up when you go out. The less your skin is exposed to cold, dry air, the better it can retain moisture. Make sure to wear a hat, scarf and gloves and a long coat that shields the legs.
- Take quick, warm (not hot) showers or baths. Excessive bathing and even hot water works to remove moisture from your skin. Not more than one bath every 1-2 days is a general guideline. Pat yourself dry and while your skin is still moist, use a moisturizer.
- Use mild, nondeodorant soaps, solvents and other products that cause your skin to feel dry. In addition, soap only your underarms, genitals and feet. Wear rubber gloves when handling strong detergents or other chemicals when you are cleaning the bathtub or the dishes.
- Increase the humidity in your home. During cold weather, your home's humidity levels can drop and adversely affect your skin's moisture, causing dry skin. Often a humidifier can restore the lost humidity.
- Check your wardrobe. For many people, wool clothing as well as anything tight fitting can be very irritating.

## Blisters

Blisters are usually caused by repeated rubbing against the skin. To prevent blisters, don't wear shoes that are too tight or rub against your feet and wear gloves to protect your hands if you're carrying heavy objects or doing yard work with rakes or shovels.

A small, closed blister should be left alone to heal. You can protect it from further rubbing with Band-Aids or moleskin pads. For blisters larger than 2-3 cm in diameter, ask a doctor about how

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to drain and care for it. If you experience any swelling, pus, fever of more than 100°F, or red streaks extending from the blister, it could be infected. See a doctor immediately.

## **Warts**

Warts are noncancerous growths that are caused by viruses. They occur on the top layer of the skin, most commonly on the hands, feet, arms and legs. Warts are usually painless, flesh-coloured, raised areas that neither bleed or drain.

Many people find that their warts go away without treatment; however, if you think you might have warts, see a doctor for a diagnosis and advice on treatment. Many over-the-counter treatments do not work and many others can cause severe skin reactions.

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