

# **DRY SKIN**

## **(asteatosis, xerosis)**

### **What causes dry skin?**

Dry skin is a problem for many people, especially in cool weather when the air is dry. Dry air causes the skin to lose moisture and then chap and crack. These chapped, cracked areas may become irritated and itchy. The dry skin rash sometimes forms round patches that resemble ringworm.

### **TREATMENT**

#### **Skin lubrication**

Treatment is intended to restore moisture to your skin. Water will briefly moisturize your skin, but the moisture is soon lost by evaporation. Lotions, creams and ointments provide an oil coating that prevents water evaporation.

Bath oils are an effective way of preventing skin moisture loss. You can put bath oil on your freshly dried skin after a shower or bath or add it directly to your bath water, but be careful as the tub will be slippery. When applying bath oil directly to your skin pour a small amount into your hands and then spread it onto your slightly damp skin immediately after toweling. To avoid feeling greasy, use just a little. A teaspoonful is enough for the entire body of an average adult. If you prefer to use a bath oil in the tub, add about a tablespoonful to the bath water and soak for 10 to 20 minutes. Do not use soap; you will get clean by soaking in the oil-water combination. Afterward, pat yourself dry with a towel; enough bath oil will remain on your skin to prevent moisture loss. There are many excellent bath oils on the market.

If you prefer not to use a bath oil, you can use moisturizing creams, lubricating lotions, mineral oil, or plain petrolatum (Vaseline) with good results. Salad or cooking oil will give your clothes an unpleasant odor. Any lubricant is best applied after your skin has been wet so as to trap and hold moisture. Mineral oil should not be added to the bath as it doesn't mix with water as the commercial bath oils do.

#### **Treating dry skin rash**

When dry skin has developed into a rash that itches, a cortisone cream or ointment usually brings quick relief. The cortisone is applied thinly to the rash once a day and massaged in well; bedtime may be convenient. As the rash improves, the cortisone is used less often. Occasionally rashes are severe enough to require a few days of oral medication.

## **Soap**

Soap is bad for dry skin. It removes skin oils needed to hold in moisture. Soap should **not** be used on dry skin. Most of us use far too much soap. Actually, plain water is often enough for a shower or bath. If you can't live without soap, it is all right to use a little soap (rinsed off well) for your face, feet, armpits and groin.

## **Bathing**

Persons with dry skin may bathe or shower once daily, but not more often. Remember two things: 1. Use no soap on dry skin areas; 2. Lubricate your skin using one of the methods described on this sheet.

## **Long-term control**

Dry skin is usually a long-term problem that recurs often, especially in the winter. When you notice your skin getting dry, resume your lubricating routine and carefully avoid the use of soap. If the itchy dry skin rash returns, use both the lubricating routine and the prescription cortisone cream or ointment.