



Winterize Your Skin

While many people think of summer as the prime season for skin damage thanks to the risk of overexposure in the hot sun, winter can also be brutal for skin. The dry winter air can cause flaking, cracking and itchy skin as well as chapped lips. Even worse, the problem is exacerbated once you step inside a heated area or hot shower, where furnace air or scalding water dries skin out even more. Dry skin can even lead to eczema.

It's easy to take healthy skin for granted, but it doesn't just happen. Make sure the products you use and the environment you live in are primed to help your skin stay healthy.

To begin, choose a cleanser that will nourish the skin as it cleanses. This means avoiding foaming face washes and alcohol-based toners. Instead, look for antioxidant-rich products that contain ingredients like tocopherol (vitamin E), lipoic acid and CoQ enzymes.

Be sure to exfoliate as well; in the winter, dead skin cells build up more easily, resulting in a dull complexion and potential breakouts. Exfoliating can help remove the buildup.

After cleansing, moisturize. Swap your water-based moisturizer for one that is oil-based. As weather conditions change, your skin care routine should, too. Many lotions labeled as "night creams" are oil-based. Just be careful to choose non-clogging oils like avocado, mineral, primrose or almond.

Be sure to wear sunscreen when going out, even in the dead of winter. Winter sun—combined with snow glare—can still damage skin. Try applying a broad-spectrum sunscreen to any exposed skin about 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply frequently if you stay outside a long time. You may be able to double up by choosing a moisturizer that is fortified with sunscreen.

Also when going outside, try to cover up as much skin as possible. Wear cotton garments underneath wool to prevent irritation. Always change out of wet clothes as soon as possible.

In addition to topical skin products, there are other practical, economical steps that you can take to protect your skin. Modify your diet to include foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants (nuts, beans, berries, apples, fish). And, as always, make sure you drink plenty of water (two to three liters a day).

Keeping your thermostat down around 68° F will help keep moisture in the air (and save on utility bills). You may also want to consider running a humidifier when heating your home. Additionally, try to keep shower temperatures below 98.6° F to lessen the drying effect hot water can have on skin. Limit hot showers to five minutes or less to protect against dryness.

If all else fails, seek professional assistance. Find an esthetician or dermatologist who can evaluate your regimen and skin type and offer advice on products or lifestyle changes needed to protect and improve your skin.

The cervix is the lower, narrow end of the uterus, also known as the womb.

Get Screened for Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is a cancer that starts in the cervix, which, early on, may not exhibit any signs or symptoms. In advanced stages, it may cause abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge. It is often caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV).

Cervical cancer is highly preventable in the United States because of screening tests and an HPV vaccination. When cervical cancer is found early, it is highly treatable and has high survival rates.

The two tests women can use to help prevent cervical cancer or catch it in its earliest and most treatable stages are the Pap test (or Pap smear) and the HPV test. Having these tests done at regular intervals beginning at age 21 is the most important thing you can do to prevent cervical cancer.

Besides regular screenings, other steps you can take to reduce your risk of developing cervical cancer are not smoking, using condoms during sex and limiting your number of sexual partners.

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Health Benefits of Yoga

Yoga is a mind and body practice with origins in ancient Indian philosophy. Like other meditative movement practices used for health purposes, various styles of yoga typically combine physical postures, breathing techniques and meditation or relaxation. In the United States, yoga is the sixth-most commonly used complementary health practice, according to a 2007 National Health Interview Survey, and is generally considered safe for most healthy people when practiced under the guidance of a trained instructor. In addition to being a fun and relaxing pastime, yoga has been linked to the following:

Stress reduction. A number of studies have shown that yoga can help reduce stress and anxiety, and people who practice yoga regularly frequently self-report they are sleeping better and experiencing lower levels of stress. Yoga practice has been demonstrated to reduce the levels of cortisol—the stress hormone. Most yoga classes end with a savasana, or relaxation pose.

Improved fitness. Practicing yoga can lead to improved balance, flexibility, range of motion and strength. These gains mean practitioners are less likely to injure themselves performing other physical tasks.

Management of pain and chronic conditions. If you're already injured or suffering from chronic illness, research shows that yoga postures, meditation or a combination of the two can reduce pain for people who have cancer, multiple sclerosis, auto-immune diseases, hypertension, arthritis, back and neck pain and other chronic conditions. Yoga can also help reduce risk factors for developing chronic diseases, such as heart disease and high blood pressure.

Groceries on a Budget



It's no secret that you can eat for less money by making your meals instead of dining out. But did you know you can also save money through smart shopping?

Plan. Set aside a certain amount of money each week or pay period and do not over what you budget. Consider buying a gift card from the grocery store you go to most often as a way of reinforcing your limit. Make a grocery list before going to the store, using coupons and advertised sales.

Purchase. Stick to your list and avoid impulse buys. Opt for the cheaper store brands for most items; in most cases you're not sacrificing quality. Buy whole, in-season fruits and vegetables (not pre-cut or packaged) for maximum produce savings. Opt for dried beans over canned—they are among the cheapest, healthiest items you can purchase. Never go shopping on an empty stomach.

Prepare. Make fewer trips to the grocery store by cooking large batches of food and freezing the extra portions.

Savory Squash Soup

Start the new year off right with this nourishing soup made from fresh, cost-effective seasonal winter vegetables. This delicious dinner will taste extra savory when you know that healthy eating and bargain buys are among the best decisions you can make over the next 12 months.

- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 chopped onions
- 2 chopped carrots
- 2 minced garlic cloves
- 1 cup canned tomato puree
- 5 cups chicken or vegetable broth
- 4 cups cooked winter squash (acorn, butternut, delicata, hubbard, pumpkin or spaghetti)
- 1½ tbsp. dried oregano
- 1½ tbsp. dried basil

In a large saucepan, warm oil over medium heat. Stir in onions, carrot and garlic. Cook for about 5 minutes, covered. Stir in the tomato puree, broth, squash and herbs. Bring soup to a simmer and cook, covered, for about 30 minutes.

Yield: 6 servings. Each serving provides 140 calories, 2.5g of fat, 0.5g saturated fat, 5mg of cholesterol, 140mg of sodium, 7g of sugar and 5g of fiber.

Source: USDA