



KAISER PERMANENTE®

Dry Skin Care

Many people have dry, itchy, flaky skin. Basically, a person's skin will become dry when it loses too much of its natural moisture. This sort of evaporation may be aggravated by dry indoor air, bathing with hot water, or by using strong soaps. Since we tend to heat our homes in the winter time—thus causing the air to become even more dry—itchy, flaky skin may be worse than normal.

To help prevent dry skin, put a humidifier in your bedroom or anywhere you spend a lot of time in your home—especially in the winter. This will help keep the air saturated with moisture. Furthermore, avoid hot showers and baths, strong detergents and soaps—including Ivory. Also, avoid all perfumed products and overexposure to the sun. You should also not use fabric softeners in your laundry.

Instead, try bathing in warm or cool water and use a gentle soap, such as Dove, Purpose, Basis, or Aveeno. On areas that are particularly dry, use little or no soap. When you get out of the bath or shower, pat your skin dry instead of rubbing it. While your skin is still damp, apply a moisturizer, such as Vaseline, Moisturel, Nutraderm, Eucerin or Keri Lotion. Reapply the lotion often during the day. If your hands are especially dry, apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly to them and wear thin cotton gloves to bed.

No matter how much you itch, avoid scratching. You might try an over-the-counter one percent hydrocortisone cream for small itchy areas, but don't use too much of this on your face or genital area. You might also take an oral antihistamine, such as Chlor-Trimeton or Benadryl, to relieve your itching. Furthermore, you might want to take an oatmeal bath, which involves wrapping a cup of oatmeal in a cotton cloth and boiling it as if to cook the oatmeal. This then becomes a sponge to apply while you bathe in lukewarm water.

In any case, if you have sensitive and dry skin, always wear cotton clothing and avoid wool and acrylic materials near the skin.

If you find your itching cannot be relieved by home treatment and is so bad you can't sleep at night, call your health care professional. You should also call if you itch all over your body but have no rash or other reasons for the itching, or if your skin is broken due to scratching.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to our members-only Web site at www.kaiserpermanente.org/california, then

click the "Kaiser Permanente Members Only" button

- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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REGIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION