



DRY SKIN

Dry skin, also known by the medical term xerosis, is a common complaint. This condition is usually the result of a defect in the skin barrier and skin hydration. Dry skin may be seen independently or in the context of other primary skin diseases such as eczema, contact dermatitis, fungal infections or a drug eruption. Xerotic skin may appear scaly and lackluster and may develop fissures or cuts in the skin which do not easily heal. Dry skin may be itchy, sting or burn.

Xerosis may also be caused by excessive exposure to water and bathing, the use of harsh soaps, lack of use of adequate barriers from harsh elements such as extremes in temperature, exposure to harsh chemicals. Risk factors for the development of xerosis include underlying skin diseases such as atopic dermatitis or neurodermatitis; living in a cool climate; or living in a dry, heated unhumidified house. Occupational exposures to irritants can also contribute to this condition.

The condition can often be avoided by taking proper precautions:

- Use of gentle non-defatting emollient soaps
- Using soap only in the critical areas
 - Face
 - Hands
 - Axillae
 - Groin
- Frequent application of emollient moisturizer
- Moving the bed away from the source of dry heat
- Humidifier in the bedroom

Prescription keratolytic creams containing urea, lactic, or salicylic acid can also be helpful. In the more severe cases, prescription topical steroids may also be indicated.

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