

# Put a little Spring back into your skin

Winter months can leave your skin dry and flaky so here's what to do.

KIM PIPER N.D.

Scaly, itchy, dry skin, parched lizard-like patches on the legs and shedding skin flakes when removing clothing are what many of us experience as we emerge from the cooler dryer winter months. No need to despair as skin restoration is easy once you gain a little understanding of how the skin functions and what to use according to the seasonal differences.

As water tends to evaporate quickly from the skin's surface in dryer weather it stops cells from exfoliating properly and these then build up into unsightly clumps leading to the dreaded flaking. During the cooler months, we also tend to drink less water adding to the extent of general dehydration. Although genetics and age can play a part in our skin's condition, there are many ways of stopping it from getting scaly, dry and undernourished. But first let's take a closer look at this remarkable and largest organ of the body..... the Skin.

Your skin has a surface area of around 2 square metres, its thickness varies from 0.5mm on your eyelids and under your eyes to 4mm or more on the palms of your hands and soles of your feet. In total, it accounts for around 16 percent of your body weight. Your skin is vital in protecting the body against bacteria (the skin itself has 1000 different species of bacteria on



it at any given time) which is one of the reasons why the outer layer of your skin continually renews itself. The entire process of skin cell renewal takes about 28 days. The skin has 3 main layers...the top layer responsible for flaking and dehydration is the epidermis (the skin you can see), then the dermal layer sits below and then finally the subcutis which is the deepest layer. Within the epidermal layer there are 5 layers or sheets of cells. The bottom sheet is where new epidermal cells are made. As old dead skin cells are sloughed off the surface, new ones are pushed up to replace them. They literally percolate to the top.

In deciding what cosmetic applications to use on the skin consider that the epidermis is our waterproof covering for the entire body and contains microscopic beads of lipids (fats) that act to minimize seepage into the body of outside substances and water. On this point, the cosmetic industry has much to answer for in marketing false claims of miracle product ingredients. The molecular structure of many of these "wonder" ingredients (collagen, elastin and herbs) are simply too large to pass through the skin. Therefore, your dead skin becomes a very expensive repository for your very expensive cosmetics that will merely make the dead skin layer feel temporarily silky smooth.

## TOPICAL TREATMENT

Given we know the top layer is constantly shedding, it's a great idea to give it a hand by dry skin brushing a few times per week. Its best to go outside for this as an enormous amount of skin is brushed off in a few minutes and provides a convenient food source for many microscopic bugs especially those whose home is your bed. Bed bugs love our skin dander. It is best to dry bristle brush before a shower or bath as you will more easily lift the dead skin off to allow the new skin to easily percolate to the top.

One of my concerns with our water system is the number of chemicals such as chlorine that act to dry out the skin. In winter, those long hot showers and baths contribute to excessive dehydration. The other factor to consider is the hardness of the water you are drinking and bathing in. If the water has too much calcium and magnesium it is said to be 'hard' and won't lather soap very well. Soft water has few minerals in it. With hard water comes scaly lizard-like leg skin and general skin dryness which can serve to further irritate health conditions such as eczema, dermatitis, psoriasis and even acne. I suggest to many clients to have their water tested or at least purchase a water filter for their shower head to remove the additional chlorine their skin doesn't need then figure out what can be done about the water hardness next.

Most retail shampoos contain harsh degreasing agents that aren't at all compatible for hair or skin. Shampoos trickle down over our bodies during the shampoo process, further stripping oils (our lipids) from our skin and drying out the top layer. Watch out for ingredients such as sodium lauryl sulphates, phthalates, PEGS, triclosan and petroleum-based ingredients in products. Leave highly

fragranced body washes and gels for the bin.

Once a week, give your skin a light oil rub. I recommend the superfatted macadamia cold pressed oil, or sweet almond, avocado or jojoba oils. Sometimes coconut oil can leave a drying finish to the skin. Rub in well on warm skin after skin brushing and showering.

The application of UV absorbing sunscreens adds yet another burdensome layer of chemicals to the skin which may cause surprising levels of redness and irritation. Best to invest in a mineral based deflective sunscreen such as those that contain zinc oxide as the main ingredient. It is slightly drying but this is a small price to pay for the safest sunscreen application on the market.

Finally, the biochemistry of the skin is such that most of what we apply to the skin will simply sit on top of the skin. There are only a few substances that will diffuse past the tight sealing of the waterproof top layer (hormones and steroids/nicotine patches/DMSO, some anti-inflammatory drugs and fat soluble Vit C and E) to list a few. With cosmetics and moisturisers, save your money and keep skin routines intelligent, simple and skin compatible.

## WHAT TO EAT

Internal hydration is first so aim to consume between 2-3 litres of water daily (more if very active) and limit beverages such as coffee, soft drinks and alcohol. Have 1 teaspoon of cold pressed olive oil over salads daily, or a teaspoon of the same oils rubbed into your skin, some cod liver oil caps a few times per week and eat oily fish

if you like them or perhaps purchase a quality practitioner brand of fish oil food supplement instead. Include avocado and nuts in the diet and eat more savoury foods and less sweet

foods. Excess salt can also be an issue. Foods that are high in beta carotene and bioflavonoids are also advised. It's really what we do 80% of the time not the remaining 20% that counts when it comes to body health and skin management.

## THE TAKEAWAY

The changing seasons can bring about changes to our skin. For this reason, we need to adjust our skincare routines as well. As the weather gets warmer and more humidity is in the air, we can lighten up our moisturising routine and keep the slightly heavier creams for winter. Keeping your skin healthy and nourished from the inside as well as reducing the skin's external exposure to unnecessary cosmetic chemicals and adjusting our water quality will mean an easier transition into spring where you will be completely ready to show your beautiful skin to the outside world once again.



If this article has raised concerns for you or your family regarding skin management and you are requiring further clarity and guidance please contact Kim.

Kim is available for health coaching and consultations Australia wide. Ph: 0412 496 125.

Kim treats everyone and all conditions.

Tune into Kim for weekly free health tips every Monday on her facebook page: Kim Piper - Naturopath.

Contact Kim via her website: [www.kimthenaturopath.com](http://www.kimthenaturopath.com)  
Em: [kim@kimthenaturopath.com](mailto:kim@kimthenaturopath.com)

