

Winter Skin Sense

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“I’ve got you under my skin.”
“That makes my skin crawl.”
“She has such a comforting touch.”

Whether we are singing or talking about skin, there is never a shortage of observations, or clichés. Skin has a prominent place in our descriptive language, as well as in our folklore. Being the largest organ of the body, it commands a good deal of scrutiny. Skin performs an

admirable array of bodily functions, and often stimulates our imaginations. We tingle. We sweat. We wrinkle.

With the weather getting colder, the wind picking up, and heaters going on in every room, it is time to review what it takes to keep our skin healthy. Remember how your skin felt when you were young and had stayed out in the cold too long? Chapped cheeks, dry lips. We were too busy having fun to notice the discomfort until we were back inside the house. Now we need to be more thoughtful about protecting our skin through the winter.

If you get on the web and type in “Skin Care,” you will get millions of hits. Many of these sites will be trying to sell you something. And you are certain to encounter conflicting or confusing information. I’ve taken a look and picked out just a few tips from about a dozen sites. Some articles had a lot of charming details, but all of the articles mentioned the following five things:

- **Moisturize often.** You may need to step up to heavier oil-based moisturizers for the winter months.
- **Monitor the humidity in your home.** The right level of humidity can be measured with an hygrometer, a device sold at most hardware stores for under \$20. Too much humidity invites mold and mildew. Not enough humidity results in dried out noses and throats and increased chances of infection.
- **Avoid long, hot showers or baths.** Use lukewarm water and don’t linger.
- **Pay special attention to your hands and feet.** Keep hands and feet dry and protected. The skin on your hands is thinner than on most parts of the body and has fewer oil glands. The skin on your feet will be more prone to drying out and cracking during the winter. (If you have diabetes, talk to your health care provider about proper foot care, and ask for advice about foot care products.)
- **Eat well.** Include essential fatty acids found in foods like walnuts, wild salmon, and sardines. Nurture your skin with nutrients!

For information on the pros and cons of other particular skin care products, you’ll need to do more investigating. You may want to start with the American Academy of Dermatology at www.aad.org.

Sacopec Valley Health Center is a private non-profit organization and is designated a Federally Qualified Health Center, providing access to health care regardless of the patient’s ability to pay. Sacopec Valley Health Center is located at 70 Main Street in Porter, Maine. Appointments can be made by calling 207-625-8126. We are open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Tuesday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.