

## The Face of Winter

### How to Protect Your Skin in the Dry, Cold Months

Barbara Hey

Winter can be tough on skin, but there's much you can do to defend against the assaults of the season. The skin's primary role -- to protect the body -- is ever more important in extreme weather, and in most locations, that means extreme cold outside and dry, over-heated air inside during the winter. Your epidermis must "weather" these drastic fluctuations in temperature, and often the result is chapped, scaly, flaky skin.

#### Facing the Frost

The biggest wintertime concern is dehydration. In colder climates, you definitely need to increase the protection quotient. "You must

months. And this is especially important for the face. And if much time is spent outdoors skiing, snowboarding, or walking, for example, your complexion needs heavy-duty protection from brisk wind and winter sun as well.

"People often forget about sunscreen in the winter," says Schumann-Ortega. For regular outdoor time -- a few hours a day -- a sunscreen with an SPF of 20 should be sufficient. But if a winter trip on the slopes or shore is part of the plan, sunscreen with a higher protective factor is needed, even if your time is spent beneath an umbrella. "Both snow and sand reflect the sun," she says, so don't be caught unprepared. Double your efforts to protect the parts of the

*Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity.*

-Hippocrates



Protect your skin from winter's harsh elements for a healthy complexion year round

over-treat skin to keep it hydrated," says Barbara Schumann-Ortega, vice president of Wilma Schumann Skin Care in Coral Gables, Florida. That means a shift from lighter skin care products used during warmer months to winter-weight products, such as thicker, cream-based cleansers and moisturizers. These will provide stronger barriers against the harsh environment of winter

face particularly prone to display the effects of dryness: The lips and the area around the eyes need a continual shield against the elements. Ask your skin care professional which products are appropriate for your skin type and effective, seasonal moisturizers and sunscreens.

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"When it's cold, you lose blood flow to the skin," says Schumann-Ortega. The result is a dry, dull tone. Facial treatments can increase circulation and rejuvenate a healthy glow. But, Schumann-Ortega cautions, be careful with peels and resurfacing treatments during the winter, as they can do more damage than good with skin that's already taxed from the harsh environmental conditions.

## Winterizing the Body

It's not just the face that suffers in the winter. Skin everywhere dries out, and gets that flaky look and uncomfortable winter itch. Hot baths -- a delightful antidote to the chill -- can further exacerbate dry skin. The solution? Add 10 drops of an aromatic essential oil to the bath to moisturize as you soak. (Lavender is particularly soothing to dry skin.) Then apply an emollient moisturizer -- a product that feels particularly thick and creamy to the touch, like a body butter -- geared for extra dry, rough, chapped, or cracked skin. Apply it immediately after drying off, when the skin can most readily absorb the lotion and restore its barrier. If dryness is still bothersome, indulge in a salt rub and full-body conditioning wrap to remoisturize.

And don't forget feet and hands. The feet, hidden by socks and boots all winter long, often go neglected this time of year and need attention, but the most obvious casualties of winter are the hands. Exposed to the elements and the subject of frequent hand-washing during the cold and flu season, hands can turn to rawhide just as holiday parties go into full swing -- not an elegant look for holding onto a champagne flute.

This is the season to slather hands with heavy, oil-rich cream at night and cover them with gloves. And don't forget feet: they also require the same special care. Consider a moisturizer for them in the evenings and sleep with socks on. In the morning, your feet and hands will feel soft and moisturized. Your skin care professional can recommend appropriate gloves, socks, and a home-care routine for this process. In addition, treat hands and feet to regular spa treatments to exfoliate dead skin cells, and paraffin treatments to replenish and moisturize.

## Relax and Enjoy It

In winter, and all seasons, stress can disrupt even the best skin. "We always ask clients what's going on in life, since adrenaline, holiday pressures, and even joy can have an effect on body chemistry," says Schumann-Ortega. The skin reflects it all. "Some clients may come in after four weeks and they look like a train wreck," she says. So do your best to minimize the effects of stress with exercise, meditation, and proper diet. And don't skimp on the self-care. Schedule time for pampering, relaxing treatments.

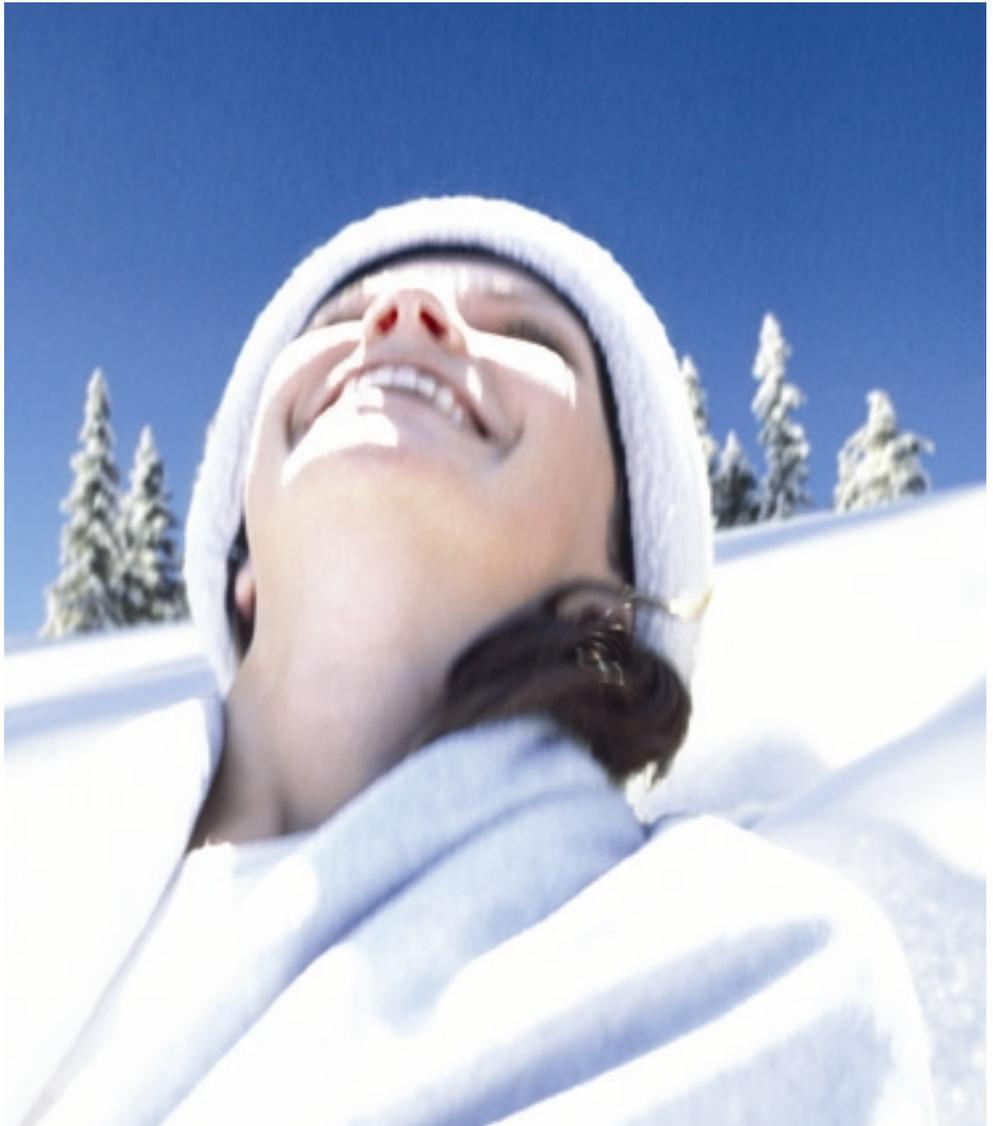
Some final tips:

- Drink water. Even when there's a chill in the air and thirst isn't overwhelming, water consumption needs to be high to combat the dry air.
- Avoid products with a high percentage of synthetic ingredients (propylene glycol, petroleum), chemical detergents

(sodium laurel sulfates), and artificial colors and fragrances.

- Employ quality skin care products suited to your skin type.
- Check your medications. Illness and ongoing pharmaceuticals can upset pH balance.
- Incorporate nutritional supplements into your skin health regimen, such as essential fatty acids, zinc, magnesium, vitamin A, and B vitamins.

Winter doesn't have to take its long, hard toll on your skin. Ask your skin care professional about hydrating products and circulation-enhancing treatments to ease the long, dry months of winter. After all, spring is just around the corner.



When you're outside in harsh conditions, cover up with gloves, scarves, and sunscreen.

# Is the Season Getting You Down?

## Shine the Light on Winter Blues

In northern climates when the heavy snows fall and the sun moves south, many people find their moods shift from upbeat to downright depressed. The severe form of winter depression--called seasonal affective disorder, or SAD--affects at least two million North Americans. Another thirty-nine million experience milder symptoms of moodiness and extended sleep patterns that somewhat resemble hibernation.

Overeating, sleeping for prolonged periods, mood swings, carbohydrate cravings, and weight gain during winter months may be more than just symptoms of cabin fever. They can suggest a biochemical reaction caused by a lack of exposure to sunlight.

Like all living things, we humans are sensitive to the seasons and sunlight. We secrete a hormone called melatonin, which helps us sleep at night and stay awake during the day. Melatonin production is directly linked to sun exposure. So, as the days get shorter

during the winter, our bodies produce more and more melatonin and we can literally feel like going into a cave and hibernating.

Many SAD sufferers manage their seasonal depression with daily exposure to full-spectrum lamps or light boxes. By getting daily doses of natural light, they can fool their brains into thinking it's summertime, and their need to sleep decreases.

Recent research shows that timing these light therapy sessions to our natural biological clocks is even more beneficial than usage during the day. Exposure to natural spectrum bright light for thirty minutes on awakening is twice as effective as evening sessions, and one study found this practice actually had an 80 percent chance of sending SAD into remission.

If winter blues are getting to you, consider investing in a full spectrum lamp and use it first thing in the morning--because SAD is for the bears.



**Loosen the grip of seasonal affective disorder.**

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# The Scoop on Meditation

## A Simple Practice with Profound Benefits

People who meditate regularly appear internally and externally five to 10 years younger than their non-meditating peers, according to author Deepak Chopra. That's good news for the estimated 10 million people who practice meditation on an ongoing basis and experience the resulting calm it cultivates.

The rich benefits come from doing something that looks like nothing: Sitting still, being quiet, and breathing deeply. Meditation works simply but profoundly by defusing the onslaughts of life -- a racing mind, busyness, deadlines, commutes, all of which have physiological effects on well-being. Meditation calms the nervous system, decreases metabolic rate, heart rate, and

blood pressure, and lowers levels of cholesterol, stress hormones, and free radicals. It also has a direct effect on breathing, slowing and deepening respiration so more oxygen circulates throughout the body. Not only that, meditation is said to lessen feelings of anxiety and depression and improve memory and concentration. And all of this culminates in slowing the aging process, as Chopra notes.

There are many meditation techniques, including focusing on a mantra, a sacred word or phrase, or your breath. But the basic intent of all meditation is focus and attention. And it doesn't take hours a day in an ashram to meditate effectively. Benefits kick in with even a short period of devoted time.

How to begin? Wear comfortable, unrestrictive clothes, sit on a cushion or chair with your back straight (think once again, comfort), rest your hands on your legs, let your eyes go soft and out of focus or close them, breathe slowly and deeply, and -- the hardest part -- attempt to empty your mind of thoughts and quiet the internal dialogue. When thoughts flit through your mind, let them pass without judging them and come back to your focus (your mantra, counting, etc.) and breathing.

Start with this sitting meditation technique for five minutes a day, and add on time as you get more at ease with the process. For more information on techniques and benefits, check out [www.abc-of-meditation.com](http://www.abc-of-meditation.com).

*Whatever words  
we utter should  
be chosen with  
care, for people  
will hear them  
and be  
influenced by  
them, for good  
or ill.*

-Buddha

The way you think, the way you behave, the way you eat can influence your life by 30 to 50 years.

Deepak Chopra

Massage can help you manage your stress levels. Stress and how we deal with it has an effect on all the above. Massage is not only effective in decreasing muscle pain but lowers blood pressure and elevates mood.

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