

Is the Coldest Winter in a Decade Wreaking Havoc on Your Skin?

Dr. Goldberg Offers Tips for Staving Off the Effects of Brutal Winter Weather

With this winter being the coldest on record in over a decade, your skin is under siege due to the brutal elements this winter has brought. Cold temperatures that consistently hover around freezing are exceptionally rough on skin and chances are you might be noticing increased dryness, itching and redness. It may even seem as if the protocol you have used in the past to protect your skin during the winter months is not working. How can you win the winter skin war? Dr. Goldberg offers expert tips and treatment options to preserve your skin and return it to optimal condition.

Q: Dr. Goldberg, why do so many experience redness during the winter months?

A: Blood vessels in the skin dilate in cold weather, which can cause the face to turn red. If you simply look around you will notice that up to half of the people you see have a lot of redness or flushing. Often this redness can be due to a condition called rosacea. This condition will produce drying and redness of the cheeks and chin area as well as itching. Now, lasers make it possible to markedly improve this condition. The laser treatment zaps the enlarged blood vessels on the face. The redness will fade in four to six weeks with continued treatment.

Q: What is the best way to protect my skin from drying?

A: Dry skin can be easy to protect. One of the first lines of defense is to modify your showering habits. You should cut down on your time in the shower and try to shower a bit less than normal. In addition, do not use hot water; lukewarm water is better. Hot water removes natural oil from the skin, making it dry and itchy. It is also important to use mild, non-drying soaps. Try to avoid deodorant soaps, as they can be more drying to the skin. Following a shower, apply moisturizers to skin immediately after a bath or shower while the skin is still wet. Applying moisturizers in this manner helps trap the water in the upper layers of the skin and decreases dryness and itching. Also, for extra protection, avoid products with fragrances and preservatives like quaternion sales, which are similar to formaldehyde and can dry out skin. In your home, adding a humidifier will do wonders. It helps to keep the air moist and can aid drying skin.

Q: Why am I noticing increased acne, and what can I do?

A: During the summer, a little bit of sunlight takes care of mild to moderate acne when you are outdoors. In the winter, acne goes wild, not because of the unfavorable weather, but due to the lack of sunlight. Lasers treatments can work wonders on winter's acne flares is the best course of action. Both the CoolTouch and Smoothbeam lasers can work wonders on these breakouts. The changes may make you forget how cold this winter really is!

David J. Goldberg, M.D. (<http://www.skinandlasers.com>) is on faculty and Director of both MOHS Surgery, and Laser Research, Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York; and Director of Skin Laser & Surgery Specialists of New York & New Jersey. He is past President of the American Society for Laser Medicine & Surgery. Dr. Goldberg was voted "one of the top ten laser surgeons in the U.S." by Self Magazine and "one of the best doctors in America" by Woodward/White, Inc. He was recently named Editor in Chief of the first web-based cosmetic laser e-journal located at <http://www.lasernews.net>.

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* Dr. Goldberg on the Road:

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2/07/04 -- American Academy of Dermatology, Annual Meeting "BOTOX® Injections: Consultation and Informed Consent", Washington, DC

2/07/04 -- American Academy of Dermatology, Annual Meeting "Non-ablative Rejuvenation", Washington, DC

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