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Does Your Skin Have the Winter Blues?

Most of us do...and it's not just our skin...but that's another story. Winter time in the Northeast just wreaks havoc on the human skin, especially on the hands and face. The drastic climate changes that we experience play a key role in a wide variety of different skin conditions and concerns. The combination of cold temperatures, wind, dry interior heat, and the fluctuation between the two inhibits the skin's natural ability to adapt to its environment.

The skin is our body's number one defense mechanism from the environment. It regulates body temperature and protects us from internal and external damaging factors.

First, the cold, dry outside temperatures cause the blood vessels to constrict. When this occurs for an extended period of time, this protective function will result in dehydrated, less nourished skin. When the blood vessels are functioning at their best and circulation is fluid, the skin is being nourished and cell turnover is at its peak. Thus, it only makes sense that during cold, dry winter months, skin cell turnover decreases, circulation decreases, and skin easily dehydrates.

This is particularly important for all of you that are winter sports fanatics and spend a great deal of time out doors skiing, skating, snowmobiling, and sledding. Even more so for those of you whose jobs place them outside during these few frigid months.

Second, the dry, internal heat temperatures in our homes and workplaces have the ability to not only de-

hydrate the skin, but our bodies as a whole. This is a key time of year to check that humidifier in the house!

Dry, dehydrated skin appears flaky and dull in appearance. It lacks a healthy luster and glow, as well as natural plumpness.

Third, temperature fluctuation places a huge amount of stress on our skin. Whether simply walking between the house and the car, the car and the job, or from the slopes to the lodge, the skin is designed to adapt to environmental changes. But like everything else, the older we get, the more difficult the adaptation process is. The more stress and strain that is placed on that physiological adaptation process, the more energy and time required to accomplish a job that once was quite simple.

The disturbance in vascular fluctuation in the skin results in tiny dilated capillaries, also known as telangiectasia. These superficial "veins" are common along the sides of the nostrils, at the junction of the face, as well as the cheeks and chin.

Proper moisturization of the skin is imperative. You must make sure that your daytime moisturizer hydrates the skin, but also has a sunscreen. During the winter months, the earth is actually closer to the sun, just tilted at an angle, and the reflection off the snow and ice amplifies the UV intensity, still contributing to UV damage to the skin. Many day moisturizers are packed with UV protection as well as vitamin A and E, and barrier ingredients that protect the skin. Nighttime is

an entirely different story. If you will recall, your skin cells renew themselves 30% quicker at night, than during the day, making an active night time moisturizer a key player in the skin renewal process.

For the winter and early spring months, I often recommend that my clients minimize the use of retin-A, glycolic and other acids since their cell promoting qualities will contribute to drier, more sensitive skin. Instead, choose nighttime moisturizers that are rich in humectants and antioxidants that will nourish, hydrate, and protect.

Water, water, water—I can't stress enough the need for water intake. Each of our bodies are different, and what each individual requires will vary, but eight glasses a day is a bare minimum. Your body, your skin, and your brain need water to survive. Proper water intake will not only flush the skin, but will increase energy levels and minimize headaches!

Life is short. Live it to its fullest. For those of you who spend a great deal of time out doors, please do not forget your sunscreen!

So, don't be blue—it's April and we're almost through. Before long, we'll be sweltering in the summer sun!

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