

Winter SKIN SOS

ALL SKIN TYPES NEED PROTECTION FROM HARSH WINTER WEATHER. TRY THESE SOOTHING SOLUTIONS FOR A HEALTHY, BEAUTIFUL COMPLEXION

When temperatures drop, the odds skyrocket that your skin will feel tight, become flaky and look red, thanks to culprits such as the season's cool air, dry wind and low humidity (both indoors and outdoors), as well as bad skin habits, such as overly hot showers and inadequate moisturizing. The resulting dryness is bad news for your face. "Water helps preserve the hydration of the outer layers of the skin, creating an effective barrier that protects the body from bacteria and irritants," says Kenneth Beer, M.D., director of the Palm Beach Esthetic Center, in Florida. Here, a winter skin-care plan that will keep your skin healthy and better protected.

If your skin is...OILY

Although you get some protection from sebum (oil produced by the sebaceous glands that also helps your skin retain moisture), it's not always enough. "The surface can look greasy and shiny even while the underlying layers are not properly hydrated," notes Jody Alpert Levine, M.D., owner and cofounder of Plastic Surgery & Dermatology of NYC, in New York City. Clues that your oily skin is crying for moisture include tightness, flaky patches and sensitivity to products that you can normally tolerate in warmer months.

HYDRATION Rx FOR OILY SKIN

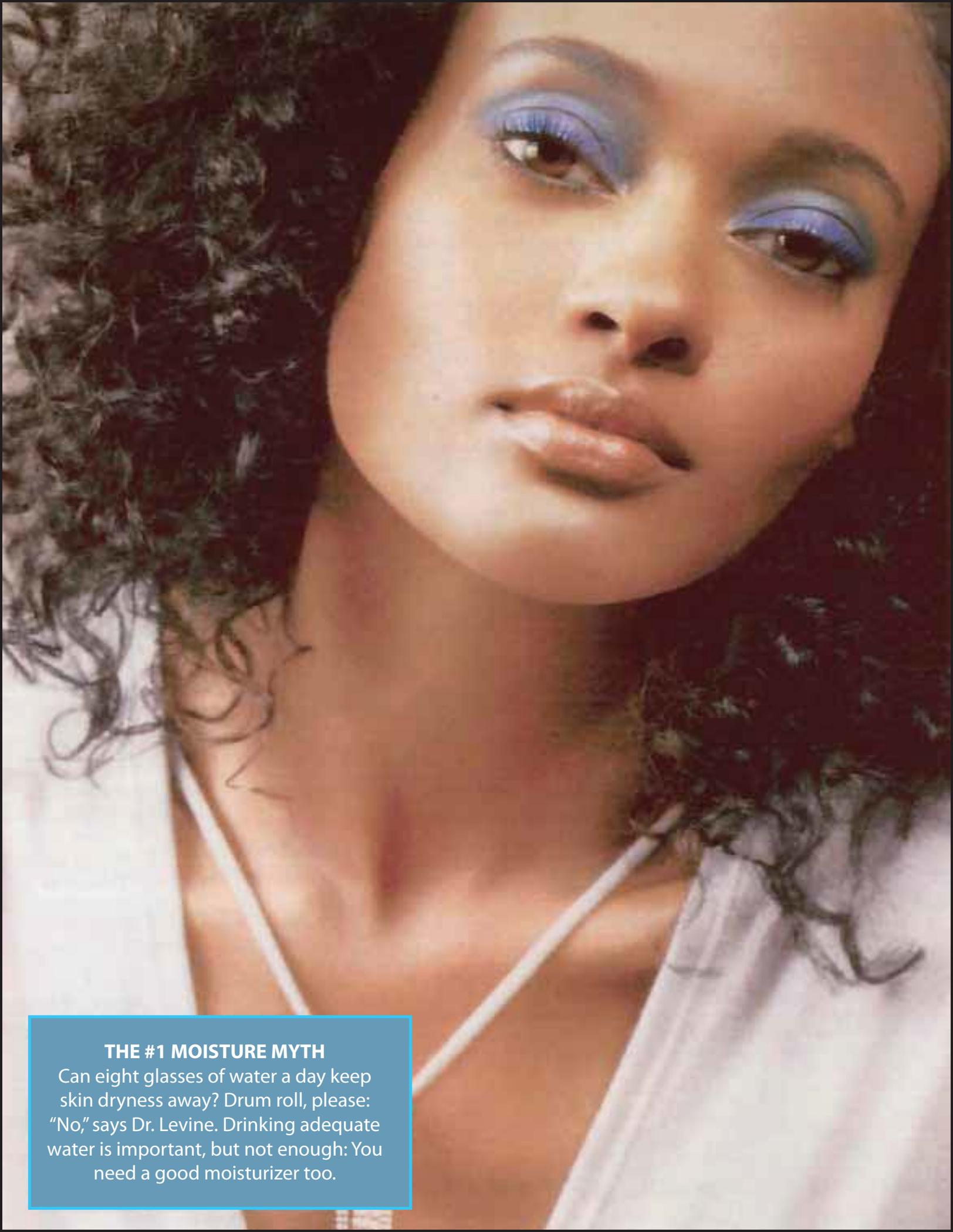
Cleanse: Cleansers with exfoliating and antibacterial properties, such as benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid, are great for keeping the skin clear, but in winter switch to products with lower percentages of these active ingredients or more-moisturizing versions.

Moisturize: A lightweight oil-free moisturizer will keep water in the upper layers of your skin without clogging your pores. (Remember, oil doesn't equal hydration, but water does.) Also keep in mind that even if you may not need a moisturizer, you

still need to apply a sunscreen—yes, even in winter.

Treat: If you regularly use an acne treatment product to keep oil and breakouts in check, "you may need to cut back," notes dermatologist David Bank, M.D., director of the Center for Dermatology, Cosmetic & Laser Surgery, in Mount Kisco, New York. Try replacing benzoyl peroxide with salicylic acid, which has similar antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties but is less drying.

Extra: A weekly pore-cleaning mask is still ideal for ridding the skin of excess oil, but switch to one that also contains moisturizing ingredients.



THE #1 MOISTURE MYTH

Can eight glasses of water a day keep skin dryness away? Drum roll, please: "No," says Dr. Levine. Drinking adequate water is important, but not enough: You need a good moisturizer too.

If your skin is... COMBINATION

When your skin has a split personality, you get two different skin reactions in winter. For instance, your temples and cheeks, which are already on the normal to dry side, can become even more dehydrated, while the oily T-zone can get flaky, especially around the nose. Also, it's not uncommon for combination skin to become less tolerant of the acne treatments that you're so reliant on, making the goal of a balanced complexion—which Dr. Levine defines as smooth with no shiny or overly dry areas—quite a skin challenge.

HYDRATION Rx FOR COMBINATION SKIN

Cleanse: Using a gentle pH-balanced cleanser will preserve your skin's protective layer of sweat and sebum. Gentle exfoliation is also important to keep T-zone pores clean and remove dry patches and flakes.

Moisturize: "Don't put moisturizer where you don't need it," advises Dr. Bank. Instead, use a richer product on the drier areas and a lightweight lotion along the T-zone. While this extra step might take a bit more time, it will keep combination skin clear and happy.

Treat: At night apply an oil-free moisturizer all over your face, avoiding the T-zone. Follow up with an acne treatment, such as one containing 2 percent salicylic acid, over your breakout-prone areas.

Extra: If you love using toner to tighten up the pores in your T-zone, make sure you use an alcohol-free formula with moisturizing ingredients that won't dry out your skin.

If your skin is...DRY

When you already have dry skin, you fight a year-round battle against tightness, dullness, roughness and even more pronounced wrinkles. These symptoms become more prevalent and harder to treat during the colder months. And don't be surprised to suddenly experience these conditions if you've never had dry skin before. As you get older, oil production begins to decline and your skin barrier becomes weaker and progressively drier. "Also, hormones play a role in keeping oil production up, so the loss of estrogen during menopause is another whammy," notes Dr. Bank.

HYDRATION Rx FOR DRY SKIN

Cleanse: "The key is finding the right wash," says Dr. Levine. Bar soap will strip oils from your skin, so use a hydrating formula or a cream cleanser that leaves behind a protective film.

Moisturize: Apply moisturizer while your skin is still damp to help lock in hydration, or layer it with a serum with absorbing humectants to draw water into the skin. Sun-damaged skin is also drier than healthier skin, according to Dr. Bank. So always follow with sunscreen. In the evening apply a night cream or dampen skin, then apply Vaseline to seal in the moisture. "It won't feel greasy or clog your pores," Dr. Levine promises.

Treat: Dry skin benefits from gentle exfoliation, whether it's a scrub or a light acid, because it optimizes your skin's barrier function. To start, limit any kind of exfoliation to once or twice a week.

Extra: Treat your skin to a weekly mask to add moisture back.

If your skin is... SENSITIVE

Sensitive skin, which tends to get red and irritated from different triggers such as temperature changes, certain skin-care ingredients and spicy foods, only worsens in the winter. Whether your sensitivity is just a temporary situation from skin-care products or a symptom of a more complicated condition like rosacea—a disease that affects 14 million Americans and can include redness, flushing, broken blood vessels and acne—dryness will only exacerbate the stinging, itching and inflammation. "You see more sensitive skin cases in the winter because the barrier isn't working as well," says Dr. Bank.

HYDRATION Rx FOR SENSITIVE SKIN

Cleanse: Look for mild cleansers that are soap- and fragrance-free or contain calming ingredients such as aloe or chamomile. And wash skin very gently in lukewarm water just once a day.

Moisturize: Sensitive skin is especially vulnerable to sun damage, so protect it with a sunscreen that features zinc oxide or titanium dioxide as its main ingredients. Avoid lotions or gels which are formulated with alcohol and will irritate this skin type, advises Dr. Levine.

Treat: If you experience a flare-up or redness brought on by a trigger such as cold wind, apply a hydrocortisone lotion for quick relief from itching and irritation. Because it is so potent, make sure not to use it every day.

Extra: Since less is definitely more when it comes to sensitive skin, skip any exfoliation. "This skin needs to be babied," notes Dr. Bank.