Skin Care In Winter

As winter sets in, with it's low ambient humidity, water is lost from the skin to the atmosphere leading to dryness. A low skin temperature causes blood vessels to contract and less fluid reaches the skin. In addition, the elderly have reduced number of sweat and sebaceous glands, which prevents the skin from being properly hydrated by the sweat and protected from water loss by the sebum. Hence dry skin problems worsen with age.

Dry skin is first perceived as a sense of tightness on the facial skin, especially on the cheeks and around the mouth. In other areas of the body, itching or a fine grey scaling may be the first sign of dryness. On the palms and soles, it begins as a parchment like hardening of the skin and cracks at the edges of the palms and soles as well as itching, irritation and redness around the fingers and toe nails. If due care is not exerted at this point, the itching leads to scratching which leads to fine erosions on the skin in which dust particles settle leading to aggravation of itching. This cycle continues tills such time as the skin breaks down completely leading to eczema. This is called asteatotic eczema. The areas that are most prone to this are those in which the number of sweat glands per unit area is low, such as shins, [front of legs], front and sides of thighs and hips, flanks and back. While winter causes skin dryness it also causes people to dries warmly. However, come February the temperature rises without an associated rise in humidity. Warm clothing is given up. The skin is faced with a warm dry challenge as opposed to a skin is inflamed with winter itch or very early invisible inflammation of the skin and this skin is exposed to sunlight, it turns dark, hence moisturizing sunscreens are recommended rather than plain moisturizers on sun exposed areas. To add insult to injury, ambient dust settle son the skin and promotes increased moisture loss by increasing the surface area of the skin. Environmental pollutants such as vehicular and industrial fumes with their burden of particulate matter can easily penetrate dry and chapped skin and damage it.
One should change over to fatted soaps in winter and soap the body only once a day. Repeated wetting and drying of the skin leads to overall dryness of the skin. A face or body wash should be followed by dabbing and not rubbing the skin. This should be followed by application of a moisturizer within 3 minutes. Cold creams are preferred to vanishing creams. Moisturizers should be minimally perfumed or unperfumed. Men, who use shave gels, shave foams, after shave and astringents, should precede the shave with application of oil or a heavy moisturizer. Face and body talc increase drying. Elderly people should use a non-soap cleanser, generally available as a liquid or gel. The traditional castor oil bath has much to recommend it. People who work in air-conditioned offices need to stay away from the AC vent or deflect the output. They need to apply moisturizers to the face and neck, elbow to hand and knee to ankle once in 3 hours. 2 wheeler riders must protect their faces from the wind chill factor, dust, pollutants and sun by using a helmet with visor, their hands with gloves and their feet with shoes and socks. Women must wear shoe and socks as open footwear gives rise to chapped, cracked, tanned, aged looking feet in winter.

Statistics of Dr. D. S. Krupashankar’s study:

14.25 of 1000 sequential patients had dry skin related problems or diseases.