
Save Your Skin

WHEN THE WEATHER outside is frightful, a long, hot shower may sound delightful, but it's only going to aggravate dry skin. While it's essential to use rich, thick creams, Dr. Benjamin Barankin, medical director of the Toronto Dermatology Centre, advises that winter skin care should start with changing up your shower routine. "Older skin is more susceptible to dehydration since it produces less oils and naturally self-moisturizes less," he says. First off, he recommends turning down the water temperature, as hot water strips natural oils from the skin. Then, substitute milder soaps and cleansers, like Dove products for sensitive skin. And as good as it feels to relax under the spray, don't linger for more than 10 minutes. Be sure to pat dry with your towel, as rubbing will also take away the oils on the skin, which "is thinner and more fragile" due to aging. This is exacerbated for some "due to the effects of years of pollution, sun damage and smoking – first- or second-hand – along with various medications." Be sure to moisturize head to toe within three minutes of stepping out of the shower and cover up quickly with a robe or your clothes to keep the moisture in and allow it to penetrate deeply. Barankin also suggests getting a cool-air humidifier for your bedroom. "It adds moisture to the air, which goes back into the skin. If it was warm air, it could make the skin itchier as that can cause sweating. Since we spend eight hours or so in the bedroom, it's a great opportunity to add moisture back into skin with little effort."