

Thirsty Winter Skin



Even if, for example, dry skin (sebostasis) always requires a lot of moisture – certainly more than oily skin (seborrhoea) – there are big differences between the care needs of the different skin secretion types and between seasonal influences.

What is different in winter?

The temperatures are dropping. Nothing new so far. But when the temperatures drop below eight degrees, the sebaceous gland production decreases, and the moisture in the skin decreases. **The falling temperatures cause dry skin.** In addition, the winter air contains relatively little moisture, not to mention the dry heating air.

To regulate heat, the blood vessels under the skin contract to retain heat inside the body. As a result, the blood supply to the skin is reduced, producing less oxygen and nutrients. **Regeneration mechanisms work more slowly**, making the skin susceptible to unfavourable external influences such as bacteria, fungi, and other pollutants. All of this explains why skin problems occur more frequently in winter.

But let's first look at how you can differentiate between seasonal skin care.

The emulsion form

To do this, we'll take a quick excursion into chemistry and look at the different types of emulsions. What are we talking about here? The emulsion forms oil in water (O/W) and water in oil (W/O). In this context, we can't ignore the term emulsifier.

But what is an emulsion? From a chemical point of view, an emulsion is created when making creams and lotions. Immiscible substances such as water and fat are mixed. These two phases - because they are immiscible - separate. Every housewife knows this because it is no different in the home kitchen. Emulsions are therefore initially unstable, even if you can achieve a short-term mixing by shaking, for example. Only an emulsifier with a fat-loving and a water-loving molecular part stabilizes emulsions. Cosmetically, the simple emulsion forms oil in water (O/W)

and water in oil (W/O) are mainly used. It should now be obvious that most "skins" need not only a lot of moisture in winter, but also a little fat for protection, and so a W/O emulsion form is preferable. **But be careful:** good creams should not contain artificial emulsifiers such as polyethylene glycol. These remove moisture from the skin when you wash it.

Is your skin tight and itchy?

Winter can be particularly stressful for sensitive skin. Unlike other parts of the body, the skin on the face is not protected against the constantly changing **influences of wind, rain, UV rays, heat and cold**. Dry air outside, heated air indoors - this constant change is a real strain on the skin. Now is the time when the skin needs to be regenerated and soothed, otherwise, redness and itching are inevitable.

The skin on the face - regardless of skin type - loses moisture, dries out, becomes tight and itchy. Scratching in response to itching promotes the penetration of allergens. Now more skin care is needed than ever. All care products should be within the pH range of the skin, i.e. in the range of 5.5.

Irritants burden

Despite increased care, the skin's barrier function is affected, and the acid mantle regenerates less well. If the skin loses its suppleness, it becomes drier, cracked and flaky. It is then very susceptible to irritants that can break through the skin's protective barrier from the outside.

There are the following ways to strengthen the acid mantle and prevent drying out:

- Increase care frequency.
- Use a rich cream.

Both variants have advantages and disadvantages. If the frequency is increased, the skin does not have to adjust to a new product, which can prevent irritation. This is problematic for two reasons: frequent application of cream could exceed the limits of everyday possibilities. Using care products with a high-water content could lead to frostbite in icy temperatures.

The easier way would be to go for a richer cream, i.e. one with more fat content. For very dry skin, I would recommend an intensive cream or ointment. If you are unsure about how well it will tolerate, a test on the inside of your upper arm could give you certainty. However, if you are prone to acne, you should avoid creams that are too oily.

Which areas of the skin require particular care:

- Face
- Lips
- Hands

More moisture?

But even oily creams alone cannot break the "itch-scratch vicious circle". Gentle care is now the order of the day. **When cleaning your face, you should be even more careful than usual.** Too frequent and too intensive peelings, intensive brushing and excessive contact with water are not beneficial here. Water not only cleanses, it can also leach out the skin and thus remove moisture and fat. The skin's protective barrier could be weakened too much. This is exactly what we want to avoid in winter.

Don't worry, this is not an argument against proper facial cleansing. Cleansing is important and should of course be done regularly with suitable products. But gently. Washing and showering should not be excessively long and the water should not be too warm. Cleansing foams and cleansing milk are suitable for the face and mild shower gels and shampoos for the body. An occasional **peeling** is of course also important in winter, because peelings help to make the skin soft and smooth.

Only in winter, when they can have the opposite effect. The skin can react to a "scrubbing treatment" with irritation. As is almost always the case, the amount matters. Peeling once a week should be enough. Enzyme peels without abrasive particles gently remove dead cells and do not dry out the skin. This is why they are preferable in winter.

Creams with a sufficient fat content and vegetable oils such as argan or jojoba are suitable for skin care . The care products should not remove moisture from the skin and should be as alcohol-free and moisturizing as possible, as well as pH-neutral. The problem here is that a rich layer of cream is often perceived as unpleasant. This is why **products with urea** are recommended. Urea increases the care effect of a product and by swelling the skin, water loss is reduced. Hyaluronic acid has a similar effect. These two active ingredients can reduce the fat content of a care product. Masks, especially fleece masks and modelling with appropriate ingredients, are helpful in quickly moisturizing the skin in between.

In addition to the appropriate care measures, the overall care package in winter also includes "care from the inside". What does that mean?

- **Sufficient sleep: 70 % of cell renewal processes take place during the night.**
- **Healthy indoor climate:** Heated rooms are just as bad for the skin as the cold outside. We can't avoid heating. But we can ensure that the rooms are humidified. 40 to 60 percent humidity is optimal. Humidifiers can be helpful here. But plants also give off moisture and improve the indoor climate.
- **Diet, especially fluid intake:** 1.5 litres of fluid, mainly water, but also fruit or herbal tea, is recommended. A balanced diet with whole grain and dairy products as well as plenty of fruit and vegetables as a source of vitamins and minerals is another important factor. Vitamin C is particularly important. Nutritionists know that people tend to eat a little heavier in winter than in the warmer seasons. That is why a nutrient-rich diet with substances such as biotin, iodine, zinc and vitamin A is particularly important. Of course, there are enough nutritional supplements that could cover this requirement. But regardless of the possibility of overdose, it seems that the interaction of these substances is the best way to ensure this as part of a healthy diet.

In winter we need to protect our skin especially. Moisture alone is not enough. The skin needs to be protected from the cold as well as the sun. This problem affects both men and women and especially children.