



## TIPS FOR WINTER SKIN CARE

Older skin is thinner and less oily, so it tends to be drier and more susceptible to infections and rashes. If injured, it doesn't heal as quickly as it once did, and minor irritations can become serious wounds. Complications caregivers need to be on the lookout for are dry skin, fungal and skin infections.

**Itchy, Dry Skin** is the most common skin complaint in the winter. Severely itchy skin (called pruritus) can be very annoying and, over time, make your loved one irritable if it's affecting their sleep, or even lead to skin infections.

To help alleviate this condition:

Take fewer showers or baths (2 or 3 a week is fine), keep them short and not too hot, as hot water irritates skin

Use a minimal amount of soap (which removes oils), and avoid using soaps containing alcohol. Look for soaps that contain glycerin, sunflower oil or soybean oil (Dove and Olay, for example) and be sure to rinse well.

Avoid deodorants and perfumed soaps, which contain chemical irritants

Avoid scrubbing harshly. Use a soft cloth or natural sponge

Moisturize. Gently pat skin dry and leave it moist.

Apply a moisturizer. Find one high in petrolatum.

If your loved one takes baths, add cornstarch or colloidal oatmeal to the water.

Apply pure petroleum jelly to extremely dry areas after a bath or shower.

Avoid bleaches, fabric softeners and heavily perfumed detergents, which may irritate skin.

Use cotton clothing, which is less irritating than wool or synthetic fabrics.

Offer plenty of fluids; steer away from alcohol, spicy foods, tobacco and caffeine.

If itching becomes severe, try calamine lotion, cold compresses or cortisone creams. Keep fingernails short.

\*If itching is severe and/or becomes a nervous habit and is causing sores and bleeding, consult a doctor or dermatologist.

**Fungal Infections** can crop up on individuals if their immune system is weak or has poor circulation, diabetes, or takes antibiotics or corticosteroid drugs.

Fungus grows in warm, moist areas of the body (armpits, under the breasts, skin folds, genitals, scalp, the mouth and spaces in between toes). It causes itchy, cracked, sore skin that can become infected. Fungal infections should be addressed with a doctor, but here are some suggestions to prevent or help get rid of a fungal infection:

Keep skin clean and dry. Use a hair dryer on a cool setting to dry hard to reach places.



# In Care of You

Providing support for those who support others

## Tips for Winter Skin Care, *continued*

Wear loose cotton clothing, especially underwear and socks, to enable air circulation

Change shoes and socks once or twice a day, and wear shoes that let air circulate

Use over the counter antifungal cream or powder.

**Skin Infections** A variety of skin infections are

common in older people who are ill — especially those who have poor circulation, diabetes or edema (swelling). The two most common are cellulitis and erysipelas, which often start at the site of a scratch or wound, and grow into a red rash that is tender and warm to the touch. These infections are serious, and require a doctor’s immediate attention.

Source: Virginia Morris, How to Care for Aging Parents, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition.

## The Benefits of Caregiver Support Groups

Caregivers who participate in support groups:

- \* Feel less lonely and isolated in their caregiving situation because of the wonderful social support that occurs in such a group.
- \* Feel accepted without judgment by the other members of the group who are dealing with very similar situations. Their experiences and feelings, positive or negative, are normalized and accepted.
- \* Have fewer feelings of depression, sadness, anxiety, and distress because one feels validated.
- \* Gain a sense of empowerment over their situation and learn coping skills. Support groups are a great place to ask for advice and learn about community resources.
- \* Gain knowledge from other group members how to handle difficult situations when communication and caregiving skills are shared by other group members.
- \* Learn what they might expect in the future for their caregiving journey with their loved one and be able to plan ahead.
- \* Learn the importance of a backup plan.



### Support Groups

- 1st & 3rd Mondays of the month at 6pm, First Presbyterian Church, 314 Xenia Ave, Yellow Springs
- 1st Wed of month at 11:30 am, GCCOA Xenia office
- 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 9:30 am, Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton-Xenia Rd, Beavercreek  
*Note: No group Tuesday March 26th*

**Weekly Radio Segment:** Partners in Caregiving every Thursday soon after 6pm, WBZI—FM 100.3 AM 1500