

Skin Sense

facts from the experts

Tips On Keeping Sensitive Skin Healthy

(NAPSA)—According to the American Academy of Dermatology, 40 percent of Americans believe they have sensitive skin. With heat and humidity, skin sensitivity can be exacerbated, leaving millions of Americans' skin stinging, itching, or red. In many



Dr. Draelos

cases the source of the irritation is a common household product. Sunscreen, cleaners and laundry detergents are some of the most common culprits.

Zoe Draelos, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Dermatology at Wake Forest University and an expert on treating skin irritations, has some tips on caring for your sensitive skin:

1. Choose sunscreen products that have a minimal number of ingredients.

If you have sensitive skin it doesn't mean you should avoid sunscreen—you just have to be more selective about the products you use. A good rule of thumb is to use a sunscreen that contains only zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. These ingredients reflect rather than absorb UV rays, so allergic reactions are much less common. Also, be sure any product you use is fragrance-free or contains very little fragrance.

2. Read the labels when you purchase cosmetics.

In order to avoid potential irritation, stay away from fragrances and dyes in cosmetics. Choose products with a short list of ingredients. The fewer the number, the

less likely the chance of the ingredients interacting with each other and further aggravating sensitive skin symptoms. Also, keep track of expiration dates and throw away items that have expired. Make-up can become spoiled or contaminated. Standard life spans include: one year for foundation and lipstick; three-to-four months for mascara; and two years for powders and shadows.

3. Use a bleach alternative for your laundry.

According to the Soap and Detergent Association, Americans average 10 loads of laundry per week so it is critical to use products that don't cause irritation. Bleach is a common household product, and like all cleaning agents, residue can remain on your clothes after washing and drying. In direct contact with your skin, chlorine bleach can aggravate sensitive skin conditions. Fortunately, there are chlorine bleach alternatives that can minimize skin irritation, such as Oxi-Clean.

4. Make a few simple changes to your beauty routine.

Use a mild soap (such as Dove) instead of deodorant soaps or other harsh soaps. Avoid lotions that contain alcohol, which can dry the skin and make irritation worse. If symptoms develop, try not to scratch and pick the skin. Instead, try an oatmeal soak, such as Aveeno, to soothe and relieve the itching.

These simple tips can help you protect your sensitive skin, but for serious or persistent problems, see a dermatologist.