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The causes behind rashes and how to treat them

Here's a great question posted on my Facebook page!

Q: Why do we get rashes when our skin gets really dry?



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A: Our skin becomes dry when it loses too much water or oil. This happens especially when there is less humidity

in the air – for example, in the winter, when we turn our heaters on in our house, this lowers the humidity in

the home and dries our skin more. In Southern California, we obviously live in a desert environment with low humidity which also increases the dryness of our skin. Also, long hot showers, or extended time spent in the Jacuzzi or swimming pool dries out our skin. Skin also generally becomes drier as we age.

When our skin gets too dry, this leads to rashes. The medical term is asteatotic eczema, or xerotic dermatitis. These rashes most commonly first arise on our shins and ankles, but can occur really anywhere on our body that gets really dry. For example, many people

get rashes on their hands if they wash them very often. When skin gets very dry, you see very fine bran-like scales on the skin, and the more you scratch, the more you seem to itch and suddenly, you have a rash! Be careful, because if you scratch enough to break the skin, you can get a localized skin infection or be left with permanent scarring.

If you think you have a dry skin rash, purchase an over-the-counter cortisone. This can help to minimize the redness or a mild dry skin rash. Also, over-the-counter antihistamines can help you feel less itchy, but be careful, some of them can

make you drowsy!

One of the most important things you can do to help prevent this type of rash from occurring is to **MOISTURIZE**. Remember, creams (which are oil-based) are more moisturizing than lotions (which are water-based). The best time to moisturize is right after you bathe – I keep my moisturizer in my shower, so I can easily apply it while my skin is still damp. This seals in the moisture. If you step out of your bath with water on your skin and no moisturizer, the water evaporates drying out your skin more.

Also, avoid products with

heavy fragrances. Yes, you may really like that watermelon scrub or that lavender cleanser, but fragrances actually pull the moisture from your skin. I recommend inexpensive mild cleansers like Cetaphil, Dove, or Cereve.

Consider using a warm-air humidifier in your bedroom instead of the heater for your house. A warm-air humidifier warms the room AND humidifies it. Just be careful if you have pets or small children ... if they get too close to this humidifier they could get hurt, because the water inside gets hot!

Lastly, if you have developed a bad rash that

you can't get rid of on your own, please don't hesitate to see your doctor who can prescribe stronger medications than those available over-the-counter. Relief is probably just an appointment away!

If you have a question for Dr. Sandra Lee, please email her at drleeskinps@yahoo.com. Her website is www.skinps.com. Watch all her TV appearances on her YouTube channel at "drsandrilee skinps." Follow her on Facebook at Skin Physicians & Surgeons. Skin Physicians & Surgeons is located in Upland. For information, contact 909-981-8929 or drleeskinps@yahoo.com.