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## READY, GET SET, GET WET

# THE EFFECTS OF DEHYDRATION

BY **SHERINA JAMAL**

The skin usually contains up to 20% water, however if the skin has become dehydrated this number drops down below 10%. Unfortunately many that have dehydrated skin don't know it and just assume their skin is dry.

The scientific definition of dehydration is: "Condition resulting from excessive loss of body fluid. Occurs when output of fluid exceeds fluid intake..."<sup>1</sup>

Dry skin on the other hand, is primarily caused from low levels of sebum(oil).

Dehydration of the skin can lead to significant signs of pre-mature aging and if not treated, can cause more serious conditions both internally and externally.

In order to counteract the effects of this condition, one must be aware of how the skin can become dehydrated, specifics such as; proper product selection, specialized spa treatments, internal care and daily tips that can help restore essential skin balance.

Dehydrated skin can appear flaky, red, scaly, rough and is also easily prone to wrinkles.

This condition can occur for several reasons' all of which cause an imbalance in the skin's pH, reduction in the skin's ability to hold in moisture, and reduction in functionality of the skin's protective barrier. Skin that has become dehydrated, loses its ability to hold in moisture and in the inner layers of the skin, this affects the flow of fluids and nutrients within the cells. Eventually if not treated, these cells can become damaged.

There are a few key factors to note that can lead to dehydration of the skin:

- Ongoing exposure to harsh environmental factors; such as the cold, wind, dry heat, and pollutants
- Ongoing exposure of the skin to the sun, plays a direct role in moisture loss
- Ongoing exposure of the skin to chemicals from cleaning products and synthetic based skin care products
- Using the wrong skin care products
- Stress, lack of sleep, smoking, poor nutrition
- Illness and on going intake of medication
- Not drinking enough water and improper nutrition
- Age

All of these factors affect the chemistry of the skin and play a direct role in moisture loss.



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Dehydration cannot only make the skin look old before it's time however there are steps one can take to help to re-hydrate and replenish the skin and body.

### *Recommendations for the Spa Professional:*

As a spa professional it is always important to offer a brief consultation to any new clients. During this consultation session, you can receive enough information to determine whether your client's skin is affected by dehydration then recommend specific treatments that can help. Treatments that focus on providing anti-aging benefits for face and body should also treat dry/dehydrated skin, as many clients that come in for an anti-aging treatment often suffer from some degree of lack of moisture.

### **Exfoliation**

Exfoliation is helpful in that it removes surface level dry/dead skin cells, which promotes new cell growth and a more balanced skin surface.

When one has dehydrated skin the skin care become easily irritated and therefore too much exfoliation is not good.

Exfoliation can be done by; dry brushing on the body, a gentle fine grain salt glow product, or by using products that contain natural non-abrasive exfoliants such as; enzymes.

During the winter when skin is exposed to cold and wind, accumulation of dry/dead skin cells is more prevalent and exfoliation can therefore be very beneficial at this time.



### **Masks/Wraps**

Facial or body masks/wraps can be beneficial to treat dehydrated skin depending on what the products used are composed of. The reason they can be beneficial is that they are left on the body for a longer period of time allowing some correction of surface layer damage which may have occurred causing the skin to become dehydrated. Masks/Wrap treatments can also help to infuse the skin with essential nutrients that may be lacking due to loss of fluids overtime.

### **Steaming**

Many spas incorporate steaming into their treatments. While a steam room or steam chamber is very effective to cleanse and detoxify the skin, it also causes the skin to lose moisture as well and is therefore it should be done only 1 every other week.

### **Massage**

To combat dehydrated skin, massage can be very effective however, using the right product is essential.

Although many ingredients found in products including water, do not absorb into the inner layers of the skin, massage can help restore moisture to the surface, and provide skin nourishment. During the winter months when the skin is exposed to the cold and wind, massage can be very helpful in healing rough, flaky and chapped skin.

As mentioned above, using the right products in your spa is the key to ensuring you are really helping your clients restore their skin's natural youthful qualities.

Many products on the market (especially inexpensive drug store brands) are created with a high percentage of water. Using a product on the skin that has been created with a high percentage of water is not effective for dry or dehydrated skin as the water does not penetrate but just evaporates leaving the skin feeling even more imbalanced.

Using products that have the ability to replenish the outer layers of the skin while also working internally to bring and hold moisture into the skin will help to ensure proper treatment of dehydration. ●

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## Active Ingredients For Dry/Dehydrated Skin

There are certain active ingredients, which you should look for when selecting products to use on skin that has become damaged due to dehydration, and some of these are:

**Vitamin C** – When skin is dehydrated its ability to protect the skin from damage is effected .Vitamin C is a powerful anti-oxidant that can help to repair the skin from damage that has occurred from free radicals. Vitamin C also helps to remove accumulated dead/damaged skin cells from the surface and improve skin's overall texture.

**Vitamin E** – is a natural moisturizing ingredient that is an anti-oxidant and also helps to restore moisture thereby improving the skin's barrier protection.

**Natural Enzymes:** Natural Enzymes such as; papaya work to gently “peel” away dry/dead skin cells from the surface and in turn making way for new healthier cells to grow that can better protect the skin.

**Hyaluronic Acid** is known for its ability to provide the skin with needed moisture. In an article written by Bill Sardi, “HA, How to Live 100 Years Without Growing Old”, - The author describes Hyaluronic acid as a natural molecule that stops or even reverses aging.

He also states that, Hyaluronic acid holds water in the body and acts as a lubricant. ...It helps to erase fine facial aging lines and wrinkles.

From all of the research that has been conducted it appears that this ingredient is a powerful tool in improving and maintaining skin hydration and overall cellular function.

**Fresh Seaweed:** Seaweed is an amazing ingredient for skin care. Each seaweed contains it's own range of active's however, in general seaweeds contain essential vitamins, minerals, and trace elements that can help to restore the skin's natural balance and replenish skin that has become dehydrated.

Aside from the above other beneficial ingredients that can help renew both dry and dehydrated skin and also prevent dehydration include; 100% pure essential oils, natural carrier oils(apricot kernel, almond, grapeseed etc), certain muds/clays, plant/herbal extracts such as; green tea and grapeseed. When selecting products for your treatments avoid products are created with a high percentage of synthetic ingredients as this can be irritating and drying to the skin.

Along with proper external care, internal care for dehydrated skin such as; drinking enough water, juicing, and proper nutrition should be an integral part of daily life. Incorporated specific supplements such as; essential fatty acids can also help to replenish the skin from the inside out by providing additional lubrication.

## Home Care Tips for your Clients:

- Avoid the Use of face/body soaps, cleansers that have been created with harsh chemical detergents such as; sodium laurel sulfates.
- Only exfoliate 1-2/week if your skin is dehydrated and is prone to irritation
- Avoid long term exposure to air conditioning
- Ensure that you are replenishing the skin with an adequate amount of fluids especially after exercising
- Protect the skin with proper clothing such as; gloves from the cold, and wind and other environmental conditions
- Select products that have been created without harsh synthetics and that contain some of the active ingredients listed above
- Proper daily nutrition incorporating foods that contain water and nutrients such as; fruits and vegetables.
- Incorporating certain supplements can also be beneficial including an essential fatty acid daily, which can help by providing additional lubrication to the body. ■

Source:

<sup>1</sup>Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary. 1981.