



IN SUMMER, water on the skin feels like balm. Which is why so many of us have to be dragged out of our showers in the morning, and why so many of us dive right back into our bathrooms as often as we can during the day.

It's necessary, we say, because cool water feels so good and washes away the dust and the grime that sweat creates. So frequent bathing is a good thing, right? Wrong, say the experts. Here's why.

SHOWER STORY

Good hygiene is very important in summer. In dry climates like Delhi, the wind carries dust granules that hit the skin with an impact. So sensitive skin suffers from low-grade irritation and eventual burn. In humid Mumbai, the build up of sweat in the folds of the body makes chances of fungal infections very high. It can also aggravate acne and spark off boils and eczema.

But washing too often creates problems too, says Dr Nina Madnani, senior consultant, dermatology, and department coordinator, Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai. "As you wash, the protective layer of the skin loses its moisture. Then, when you step out, the heat and grime attack your skin even more harshly because it lacks that layer of moisture," she says.

Your skin, therefore, becomes prone to dryness, abrasion and sun allergy and it can be deeply affected by UV rays. "Most people with dry or combination skin don't realise that washing too often aggravates the condition," says Dr Rishi Parasher, dermatologist, Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi.

CLEAN UP

Doctors say a casual splash on our faces does nothing to keep skin healthy. Proper cleansing is a must. The key to problem-

Wash your step

- Sunscreen is a skin-saviour. Use one with an SPF of at least 25 to avoid sun allergies and to keep your skin hydrated.
- Use a soap-free cleanser instead of a soap. If you have dry skin, pick creamy cleansers with glycerine or allantoin bases. For oily skin, use antiseptic face washes, astringents and moisturisers with salicylic acid.
- Apply moisturiser immediately after you wash your face or bathe.

free skin is to keep it supple and adequately moisturised. Washing the face three times a day is enough, say doctors. "As soon as you've washed your face or had a bath, apply moisturiser," says Dr Madnani. "It helps to trap the moisture that acts as a protective layer. Otherwise, moisture evaporates from the skin in three minutes."

If you have dry or sensitive skin, Dr Madnani advises you to use mild, foam-free cleansers. They clean the skin but do not strip it of its natural oil. But since there is no such thing as a "moisturising cleanser" you must use a moisturiser after your bath. "For dry skin, use a moisturiser with a slight cream base during the day and at night, a cream like Nivea or Dove." In a humid climate, moisturising is not as important as thorough cleansing is, Dr Madnani adds.

If you have oily skin, Dr Ajita Pagai, senior consultant dermatologist, Max Hospital, Delhi, says you can use soap but make sure you don't over-use it (try astringents once a day). You should also go for oil-free moisturising lotions instead of creams. "If you have acne, consult a doctor for medicated cleansers and moisturisers," she says.

GET LIPPY
Never lick your lips to moisten them, say experts. When your lips dry out, sip water, moisten your lips with that, and then apply Vaseline or a balm, says Dr Madnani. If your lips are really bad, apply butter or ghee at night. For cracked lips, use aloe vera and an antiseptic cream, or else glycerine mixed with rose water. "To cure chapped lips, use balms like Amilab and Barri-derm," says Dr Pagai. Or use lip balms with sunscreen.

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