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MASTERING DRY SKIN:

Advanced Strategies for Lasting Barrier Health

TABLE *of* CONTENTS

Introduction.....	02
What's Dry Skin?.....	03
A Closer Look at the Skin Barrier.....	06
How to Care for Dry Skin.....	13
Top Cocktail Tips.....	19
Best Home Care Strategies.....	22
Conclusion.....	24

INTRODUCTION

Dry skin is a common issue that causes pain and discomfort. As a skincare professional, you can do more than provide short-term relief. By understanding how dry skin occurs and learning the best treatment methods, you can help clients achieve healthy, soft, resilient skin.

This eBook gives you advanced strategies to find the root causes of dry skin and use treatments that bring lasting comfort, smoothness and radiance.

WHAT IS DRY SKIN?

Medically known as xerosis or xeroderma, dry skin is a condition that develops due to skin barrier dysfunction.

When the skin barrier is compromised, it causes transepidermal water loss (TEWL), where moisture evaporates from the skin at an accelerated rate.



This lack of hydration and structural integrity has three major symptoms:

01

Impaired Desquamation: Without sufficient moisture, the enzymes responsible for shedding dead skin cells cannot function correctly. This creates a buildup of corneocytes, resulting in a rough, flaky or scaly texture.

02

Visible Discomfort: Dry skin often appears dull, feels tight and, in severe cases, can crack or bleed.

03

Vulnerability: The compromised barrier allows irritants, allergens and bacteria to enter the deeper layers of the epidermis, often triggering inflammation and sensitivity.

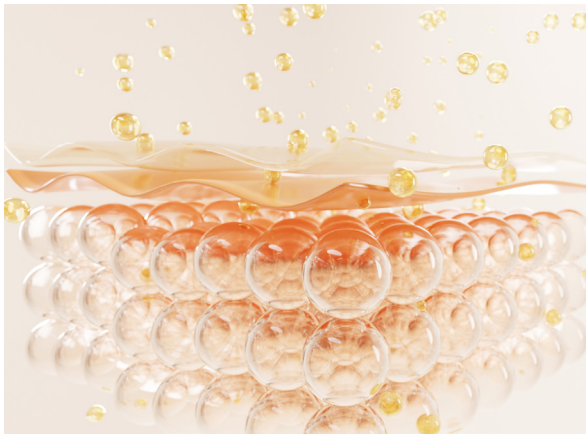
Dry Skin Type vs. Dry Skin Condition

To provide effective care, it is important to distinguish between a genetically predisposed skin type and a temporary or chronic skin condition. Use this table to help make this distinction:

	Dry Skin Type	Dry Skin Condition (Xerosis)
Root Cause	Genetically predisposed to low sebum output.	Lack of moisture and lipids due to barrier dysfunction.
Appearance	Naturally rough or dull texture. Feels tight after washing. Barely visible pores.	Flaky, scaly, irritated, red and sometimes itchy or inflamed.
Needs	Lipids (fatty acids, oils) and occlusives to supplement the lacking sebum.	Barrier-boosting ingredients (ceramides, Niacinamide) and humectants to attract water.

Dry vs. Dehydrated Skin

While these terms are often used interchangeably, dry skin and dehydrated skin are physiologically distinct.



Dry skin is defined by a lack of natural oils.



Dehydrated skin is defined by a lack of water.

Though these conditions frequently coexist and create a self-perpetuating cycle, they require different treatments. Dry skin needs ceramides and fatty acids to restore the skin barrier function, whereas dehydrated skin needs humectants to draw water into the skin to boost overall hydration.

For a deeper understanding of the difference between dry and dehydrated skin, read our article, [Hydrating vs. Moisturizing: What Dry Skin Really Needs](#).

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE SKIN BARRIER

To understand what causes dry skin, let's first take a closer look at the stratum corneum, commonly called the skin barrier.

The stratum corneum works like a brick wall. The 'bricks' are tightly packed skin cells called corneocytes. The 'mortar' is the lipid matrix, made of ceramides, fatty acids and cholesterol, which holds the cells together. This strong layer keeps moisture in and irritants out.

When this barrier lacks essential lipids, it becomes permeable, leading to water loss and irritation. The resulting inflammation further damages the stratum corneum, perpetuating a vicious cycle of dryness and dermal breakdown.

Factors that Drive Xerosis

Barrier dysfunction is rarely due to a single cause. It is often a compounding issue driven by internal and external factors.



Internal Factors

Aging: Cell turnover and sebum production naturally decrease with age, weakening the protective barrier.

Genetics: A genetic deficiency in the protein Filaggrin is linked to chronic dry skin conditions like eczema and ichthyosis vulgaris.

Chronic Illness: Health conditions like diabetes, hypothyroidism and kidney disease can cause cellular dysfunctions that weaken the skin barrier.

Hormonal Shifts: Conditions or life stages (like menopause) that lower hormone levels can significantly reduce sebaceous gland activity.

Medications: Diuretics, statins and retinoids can disrupt the skin barrier by removing excess fluid from the body or depleting the skin of natural oils.

Clinical Treatments: Dialysis, chemotherapy and radiation can impair the natural moisture barrier and reduce cell turnover, leading to chronic dryness.

Nutritional Deficiencies: A lack of fatty acids, vitamins and protein can impede healthy barrier function.

Alcohol & Caffeine: Alcoholic and caffeinated beverages are diuretic and can increase inflammation, causing dehydration and barrier damage from within.



External Factors

Low Humidity: Dry air, often created by central heating, wood stoves or air conditioning, pulls moisture from the skin's surface and increases water loss.

Harsh Soaps and Detergents: Alkaline products dissolve and wash away essential lipids, disrupting the skin's acidic mantle.

Excessive Washing: Long, hot showers or bathing too often can remove the skin's protective lipid barrier, resulting in water loss.

Over Exfoliating: Excessive use of physical scrubs or chemical exfoliators can thin the stratum corneum, causing TEWL and irritation.

Sun Exposure: Ultraviolet radiation damages skin cells and causes oxidative stress, which can deplete the skin's natural oils, leaving it dry, flaky and wrinkled.

Cold or Windy Weather: Low temperatures and wind can increase TEWL, particularly in sensitive areas of the body.

Chlorinated Water: Frequent swimming in chlorinated pools can strip the skin of its natural oils, leaving it vulnerable to dryness.



Irritating Clothing: Certain fabrics, like wool or synthetic fibers, can cause friction and irritation that worsens dry skin.

Smoking: It accelerates the aging process and exposes the skin to free radicals, which can lead to dry, coarse skin.



Accurately Assessing Your Client's Condition

To effectively address dry skin, conduct a thorough client consultation to identify all possible triggers. Here are key questions to consider:

Assessment Area	Key Questions to Ask	Why This Matters
Timing	Is your skin consistently dry or only during certain times?	Helps pinpoint environmental or product-related triggers.
Duration	How long have you been experiencing these symptoms?	Helps determine if this is a chronic or temporary condition.
Family & Medical History	Do you have a family history of chronic conditions like eczema, asthma or diabetes? Have you recently been diagnosed with a condition or undergone any treatments?	Reveals genetic or systemic factors that may require long-term barrier support
Associated Symptoms	Is the dryness accompanied by itching, redness, swelling or heat?	Distinguishes simple dryness from inflammation or chronic barrier damage.

Assessment Area	Key Questions to Ask	Why This Matters
Worsening Factors	Does your condition worsen when exposed to specific triggers (e.g., food, chemicals, heavy exercise, synthetic fragrances)?	Identifies specific ingredients or lifestyle habits that must be eliminated.
Recent Changes	Have you started any new medications, changed jobs or recently traveled to a different climate?	Helps pinpoint a clear, recent cause for the onset of the condition.
Lifestyle Habits	How often do you bathe or wash your hands and face? What is the water temperature? Do you consume excessive alcohol or caffeine?	Identifies habits that are actively stripping the skin's natural lipids or dehydrating them systemically.

HOW TO CARE FOR DRY SKIN

Once you know the factors behind your clients' condition, the next step is to design a comprehensive treatment plan that will offer lasting relief.

When designing your treatment plan, ensure at-home regimens and in-treatment products prioritize these ingredients:

Barrier Boosters

Ceramides: Improve intercellular lipids and are vital to the regulation of skin-water barrier homeostasis and water-holding capacity.

Fatty Acids and Cholesterol: Work with ceramides to maintain the skin's structure and function.

Niacinamide (Vitamin B3): Reinforces the skin's barrier by boosting ceramide production and helps reduce redness and inflammation.



Humectants

Aloe Vera: A potent soothing agent that provides a protective layer to inhibit infection and calm the skin.

Glycerin: Has strong water-binding properties that increase hydration and enhance the skin barrier function.

Hyaluronic Acid: Attracts and retains up to 1,000 times its weight in water.

Emollients

Squalane: A lightweight, non-comedogenic oil that mimics the skin's natural sebum, providing hydration and preventing moisture loss.

Shea Butter: A rich emollient with high concentrations of fatty acids and vitamins that deeply nourish and moisturize the skin.

Jojoba Oil: A fast-absorbing emollient that reduces TEWL while attracting water into the skin.



Occlusives

Petrolatum: Forms a barrier on the skin to prevent moisture loss, support barrier recovery and reduce inflammation.

Dimethicone: A silicone-based polymer that inhibits water loss by forming a hydrating barrier on the skin.

Lanolin: A natural wax-like substance with strong moisturizing and skin barrier-restoring properties to boost barrier integrity.



If your clients' dry skin is accompanied by redness, itching or swelling, prioritize anti-inflammatories such as Chamomile, Green Tea Extract, Horse Chestnut, Licorice Root Extract, Oat Beta Glucan and Witch Hazel.

Step-By-Step Dry Skin Protocol

For clients with compromised barriers, every step of the professional treatment must prioritize gentle regeneration and hydration. Use this protocol as a foundation to create a facial based on your client's unique needs.

01

Use an ultra-gentle cleanser like [Mega Cream Cleanser](#) to remove makeup, dirt and debris.

02

Perform a second cleanse with an exfoliating formula like [Glycolic Facial Cleanser](#) to enhance the penetration of hydrating and barrier-boosting ingredients.

03

Follow with a hydrating masque to flood the skin with moisture and nutrients. Our [Hydrating Masque](#) instantly hydrates and removes dead skin cells to increase product absorption and refine texture.

04

Use a hydrating, alcohol-free toner or essence, such as [Revitalizing Essence](#), with supportive ingredients to enhance moisture retention.

05

Apply a serum rich in humectants like [Ultra Hydro Gel](#) to boost water content.

06

Seal moisture into the skin with a rich emollient- and occlusive-based moisturizer like [Barrier Repair Cream](#). This ceramide-rich cream is formulated to mimic the natural skin barrier and is the perfect massage and finishing cream for any service.

07

Don't neglect the eyes; follow with an application of eye cream like our hydrating [Eye Calm](#) and pat it in gently around the orbital bone.

08

Finish with a broad-spectrum sunscreen like [Hydrating Protection Gel with SPF 30](#), which protects and moisturizes the skin at the same time.

09

As a special bonus, apply [Hydrating Lip Balm](#) to soothe and prevent chapped, irritated lips.

Make It a Chemical Peel

A superficial to mild chemical peel is an excellent modality to remove dry, textured skin and reset the skin's natural moisture barrier. An ideal option for dry skin is [Professional Exfoliator with 30% Lactic Acid](#). It provides gentle exfoliation while also moisturizing, calming and protecting the skin with soothing herbal extracts.

For best results, use a product like [Lactic Astringent Prepping Agent](#) to prepare the skin for a more advanced treatment.

For extra sensitive skin, cocktail the chemical peel with a creamy, emollient-rich moisturizer like [Daily Repair Cream](#).

To reduce the risk of post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, apply [Daily Skin Clarifier](#) immediately after peel removal.



TOP COCKTAIL TIPS

Cocktailing professional solutions allows you to personalize your treatments to achieve even greater results and improve client satisfaction. Use these recommended cocktails to enhance hydration, improve skin texture and boost overall radiance.

Accelerator Gel + Protective Skin Serum (layer)

- [Accelerator Gel's](#) Lactic Acid boosts the skin's water production, exfoliates surface dryness and creates micro-channels for following serums to go deeper.
- [Protective Skin Serum](#) has moisture-boosting ingredients and ceramides to seal it all in.



Hydrating Masque + CBD Age Delay Dew (cocktail)

- [Hydrating Masque](#) removes dried surface layers while supplying hydration with Hyaluronic Acid, Glycerin, Squalane and natural botanicals.
- [CBD Age Delay Dew](#) offers additional anti-inflammatory and barrier-boosting benefit with CBD, Niacinamide and peptides.



Ultra Hydro Gel with Daily Repair Cream (cocktail/layer)

- [Ultra Hydro Gel](#) is a 10% Hyaluronic Acid serum that will help reestablish the natural moisturizing factor within the skin.
- [Daily Repair Cream](#) is a lightweight and deeply hydrating moisturizer that helps protect the skin from environmental damage.



Vitamin C Cream + Resurfacing Night Cream (cocktail)

- [Vitamin C Cream](#) delivers potent antioxidant defense to protect the barrier against oxidative stress.
- [Resurfacing Night Cream](#) gently exfoliates dry, flaky skin while promoting a smooth surface with hydrating and moisturizing botanicals.



Restoring Fulvic Elixir + Comfort Cream (cocktail/layer)

- [Restoring Fulvic Elixir](#) fortifies the skin with antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant protection.
- [Comfort Cream](#) immediately calms dry, irritated skin with double concentrated Aloe Vera.



BEST HOME CARE STRATEGIES

True, lasting transformation is secured through consistent home care. Empower your clients to maintain their barrier integrity between sessions with effective strategies for skin health and resilience.

Skin Health Strategies

Protect the Barrier from Stripping: Advise clients to use gentle cleansers, avoid hot water and pat the skin dry to preserve vital lipids and prevent irritation.

Master Product Layering: Instruct them to apply products thinnest to thickest, ensuring hydrating serums are sealed in by lipid-rich moisturizers to maximize absorption and moisture retention.



Exfoliate Strategically: While necessary to prevent flaky buildup, stress that over-exfoliation compromises the barrier. Recommend limiting exfoliation to 2 – 3 times a week with gentle enzymes or low-concentration acids.

Prioritize Daily Protection: Broad-spectrum SPF is non-negotiable to guard against water loss and damage. Clients must also temporarily avoid high concentrations of actives like Retinol and high percentage acids when the barrier is impaired.

Foster Internal Resilience: Remind them that skin health starts within. Encourage drinking enough water, using a humidifier to combat TEWL from dry air and supporting barrier function through a balanced diet, effective stress management and adequate sleep.

CONCLUSION

Dry skin can be a frustrating and uncomfortable condition for many clients. However, with proper care and personalized treatments, your clients can say goodbye to chronic dryness and hello to healthy, hydrated skin.

To learn more about the causes of dry skin and how to manage it, [become a GlyMed Pro](#). Unlock access to our [advanced aesthetic education courses](#) to gain knowledge, tools and resources that will vastly improve your skillset. As a highly educated skincare professional, you'll easily make a significant difference in your clients' lives!

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