

The Ultimate Winter Lip Care Handbook

By Suzanne Patterson

One of the most glamorous and alluring features of a woman is her soft lips. The lips bring movement to the character of her face, and they are the lovely portals to her voice. Above all, lips reveal the personality of her unique smile and further add to the expression of the natural sparkle in her eyes. However winter cold weather and exposure, along with dry indoor heating, often brings unwelcomed discomfort to the lips and keeping them soft, smooth, and supple during this season becomes a challenge.

Fascinating Facts about Lips:



The lips are the thinnest, driest, and most transparent tissue on the body. They also lack the oil glands the face has for lubrication, so additional moisturizing is a major need for them in the cold winter months. Lips naturally lose moisture about 5 times faster than the face does, so lip texture can rapidly change if dehydration sets in.

Parched lips leads to chapping which in turn can lead to peeling, and this chain reaction can set the stage for more serious conditions such as cracked and bleeding lips. Better to head the early warning signs of serious dryness and take steps to remedy the causes before the chain of inflammation sets in.

The lips are often an accurate barometer of the level of moisture the body is maintaining during the cold months. Chapped and peeling lips can also indicate a chronic internal disorder, B vitamin deficiency, or an allergic reaction to certain substances. This is especially true if accompanied by red or cracked corners of the mouth.

Ingredient Irritants:

Ingredients commonly found in mouth products, lip balms, lipsticks, skin care products, or prescription topicals applied to the face can cause irritation to the lips. Certain substances found in toothpastes can also be culprits and make things worse, such as bleaches (calcium peroxide), detergents (cocamidopropyl betaine) flavoring agents (methyl cinnamate) and chemical additives (fluoride). Their chemical

reactions on skin, especially fluoride, can cause excessive dryness on lips. These ingredients can also trigger contact dermatitis and eczema in the skin around the mouth.

Lip balms that contain chemical additives, flavorings, and certain sunscreen ingredients, such as oxybenzone, can also be a trigger for dryness and irritation. Coloring agents in lipsticks are frequently the culprits for triggering or further aggravating dry and chapped lips in sensitive skins.



Constant licking of the lips to create surface moisture on them further aggravates the dryness condition because the enzymes and acids in saliva quickly break down the lip's thin and delicate tissue. This causes greater distress and adds to more painful lip irritation.

Problems with Petroleum:

The long held belief that petroleum based lip balms are the best product for moisturizing for lips is, in fact, quite the opposite. They do quench that dry feeling on contact, but petroleum's barrier or "coating" properties actually prevents real healing moisture from binding to lips.



As the balm wears off it draws moisture away from lips creating the dry feeling all over again. The discomfort it leaves behind creates the dependency or habit of frequent reapplication

Some of the synthetic ingredients used to make lipsticks are derived from coal tar or crude oil by-product petroleum that's allowed for use in cosmetics by the FDA. Since lipstick is applied on the mouth it gets worn away by licking, eating and drinking, or normal mouth movements that cause small amounts of the lipstick product to be ingested.

Healthy Solutions:

With these factors working against you what can be done to repair, protect and prevent that initial dryness that leads to damage? Just as lips can react to harmful ingredients and habits, they can also respond to beneficial treatments and nutrients. Start by eliminating those habits, and avoiding ingredients and products that trigger or contribute

to dry lips syndrome. Resist the lip licking urge to create "moisture" on your lips as it will only speed up the onset dryness and irritation. Instead, create a new habit of reaching for a lip nourishing balm, such as Eco Lips, that will hydrate and bind moisture to your lips with safe and longer wearing healthy ingredients.

If you are susceptible to allergies induced by certain substances always review the ingredients of any skin care, lip balms, lipsticks and dental products you use that may directly contribute to dryness and irritation. Removing these culprits usually shows a marked improvement in lip texture. Be especially aware of any topical medications, such as salicylic acid, benzoyl peroxide, and prescription creams (retinoids) that can aggravate dry and chapped lips during the winter months. Consider discontinuing their use until your lip condition improves.

Good skin care for the lips is quite simple but goes a long way to protect them against winter damage. Always use moisturizing products that contain ingredients which mimic natural skin oils. Look for lip creams and balms that are made from sources which also have humectant properties that attract and bind moisture to the skin. These can be applied both day and night, and applied as often as desired. Avoid lip balms and lip plumping products that have camphor, menthol, peppermint, citrus or any ingredient that can cause a stinging sensation as these are extremely uncomfortable on dry or chapped lips.

Lip Care Maintenance:

Exfoliating the lips should also be an important part of your winter skin care regimen. This actually helps keep them conditioned which greatly minimizes the chance of lips drying out and paving the way for chapping or peeling. Using a gentle and moisturizing lip scrub, such as Natural Born Cosmetics Sugar Lip Scrub, twice a week during your daily skin care routine will do wonders when finished off with a hydrating lip balm such as Eco Lips Gold Balm. Don't forget to apply the balm before going to bed.



Continual nurturing with healthy habits and products for lips will ward off and prevent any episodes of winter dryness. Look for products that include any of these ingredients:

- Aloe Vera: very soothing and moisturizing, and has anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties.
- Shea Butter: a natural sunblock, and contains a healing substance called allantoin.
- Jojoba Oil: one of the most nourishing oils for skin as it has the same properties as naturally occurring skin oils. It lubricates and softens on contact.
- Glycerin: a natural skin softener and humectant that attracts and binds moisture to skin.
- Beeswax: one of the best non allergenic skin softeners that also keeps moisture bound to skin. It has anti-inflammatory and natural anti-bacterial substances and creates a long lasting barrier against the elements.
- Vitamin E: a powerful moisturizing antioxidant, and a strong barrier against sun damage.
- Coconut Oil: a dry and itchy skin reliever while it softens and moisturizes.

Pro-active vitamin complexes (A, D and E) and other skin friendly plant oils and waxes also contain essential fatty acids that are easily absorbed into skin to soothe and promote healing.



A quick and natural instant relief to severe chapped lips: apply organic jojoba oil or honey directly to lips to speed up healing and get moisture back into the lip tissue. Honey creates a moist healing environment that actually nurtures skin cells to regrow. Once healing is underway keep them moist with Eco Lips Gold Balm.

Some ingredients you want to avoid in your lip care routine (and your general skin care) include:

- Alcohols in any form due to their great potential for skin irritation.
- Chemical preservatives that can lead to contact dermatitis.

- Petroleum and mineral oils. These act like sludge on your skin, preventing moisture from entering or binding to skin. Often a culprit of allergic skin reactions, especially clogged pores.
- Lanolin. This is an animal fat secretion, and is known to absorb undesirable contaminants which cause allergic reactions.

In Summary:

In winter it is especially important to keep yourself hydrated by drinking sufficient amounts of water. Use a humidifier in your home to keep the dry recycled air from pulling moisture out of your skin. Avoid using all day wear (semi-permanent) lip color products during winter because these contain a polymer ingredient and isododecane which are extremely drying on lips. They trigger a peeling effect that is caused by the lifting of the lip color due to lip movement and wear, and this can be aggravating to irritated and sensitive lip tissue.



Pass up wearing matte textured lipsticks during winter because of their dry consistency and switch to creamier types for added protection and better comfort in wear. Limit the wearing of lip glosses that are petroleum based so that you don't create a dependency on them for added moisture.

Because lips are so lacking in natural moisture they will always need extra help in maintaining smoothness, not only in winter, but year around. Your skin care program should always include regular exfoliation and wearing some kind of healthy moisturizing lip product so lips never go "bare". This will also greatly slow the advancement of fine lines and crevices around the mouth that comes with age.