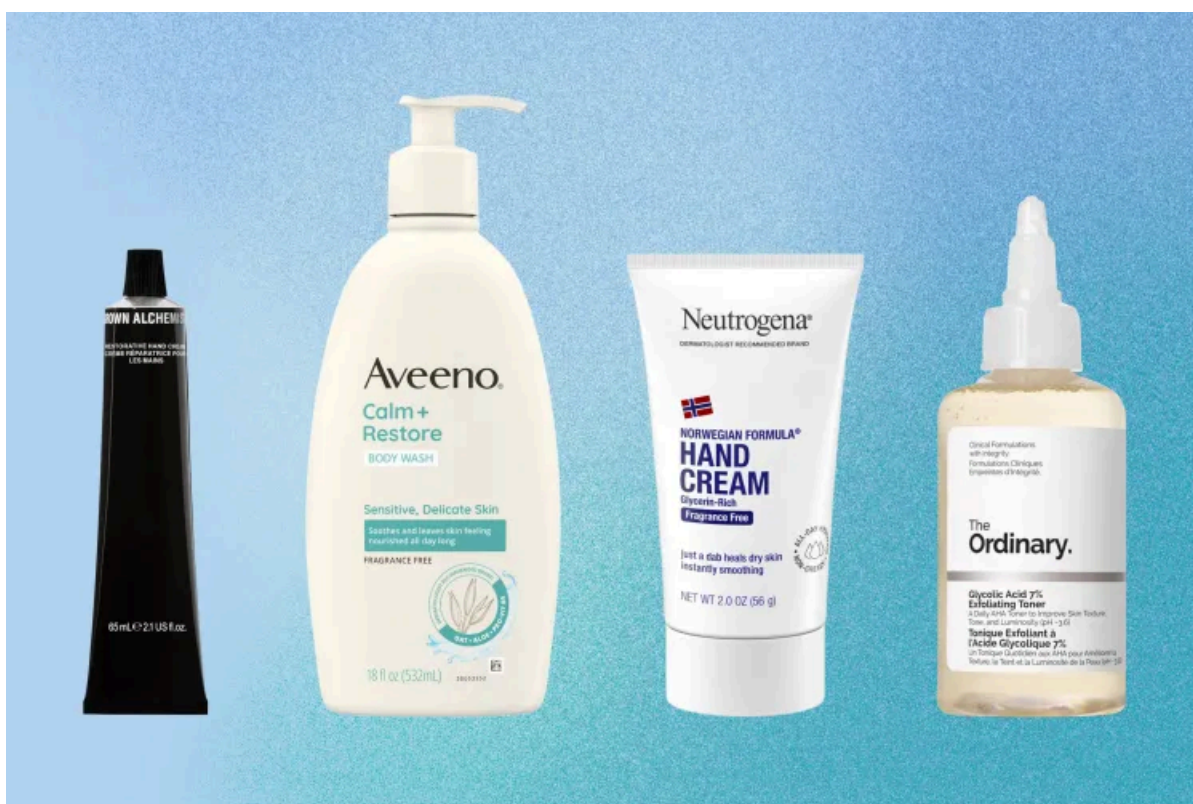


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# Dermatologists Share the Mistakes That Are Making Your Skin Worse in the Winter—and What to Use Instead

Picks from Cetaphil, CeraVe, and Vanicream.

By **Mina Hochberg** | Published on December 12, 2025 03:30PM EST



Credit: Real Simple

Winter is right around the corner, and that means [cold air](#) and dry, [heated rooms](#) are about to wreak havoc on your skin. But frigid weather isn't the only culprit behind dry, flaky skin during colder months. According to dermatologists, your skin care products might also be to blame.

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buy instead. Stock up on these dermatologist-approved products if it's time to winterize your skin care routine.

## Best Dermatologist-Approved Products for Dry Skin

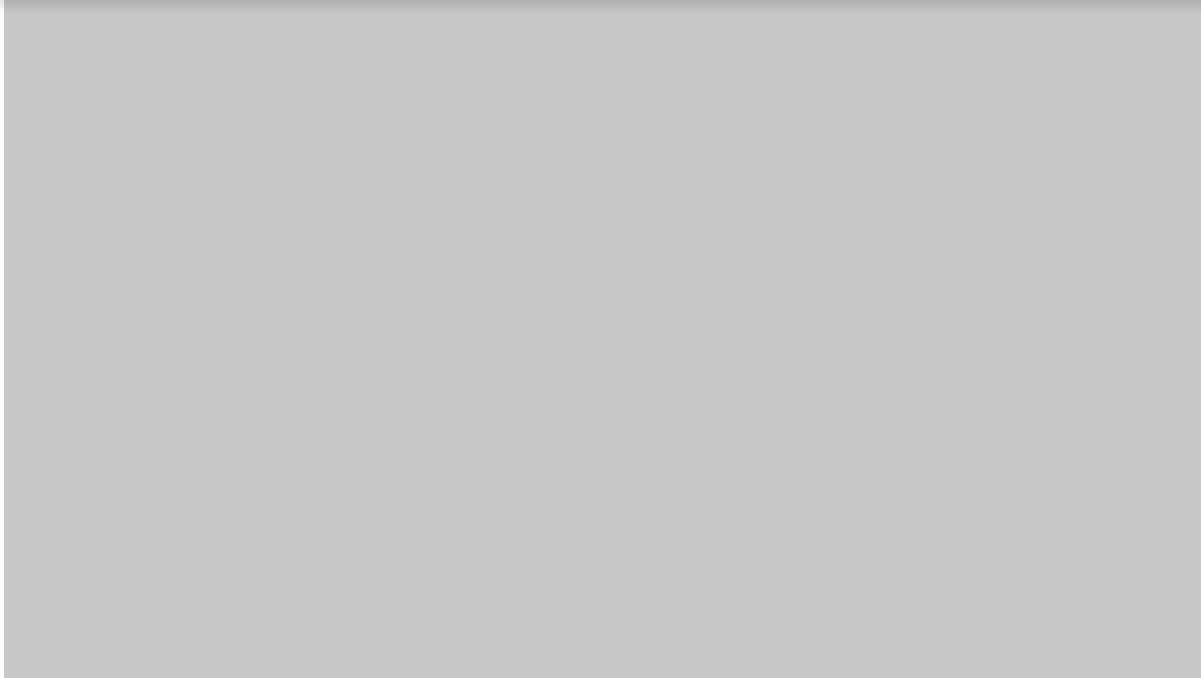
- [Neutrogena Norwegian Formula Hand Cream](#), \$6 (was \$7)
- [CeraVe Skin-Renewing Nightly Exfoliating Treatment](#), \$21 (was \$30)
- [Aveeno Calm + Restore Body Wash](#), \$13 (was \$17)
- [Matter of Monday Anti-Stress Renewal Moisturizer](#), \$44 (was \$52)
- [Grown Alchemist Restorative Hand Cream](#), \$26
- [The Ordinary Glycolic Acid 7% Exfoliating Toner](#), \$13
- [Vanicream Gentle Body Wash](#), \$12
- [Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser](#), \$12
- [The Ordinary Natural Moisturizing Factors + HA](#), \$14

## Avoid: Scented Products

## Use Instead: Fragrance-Free Products With Emollients

## Neutrogena Norwegian Formula Hand Cream

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Credit: Amazon

\$7  
\$6 at Amazon

It's tempting to scoop up yummy-smelling lotions and creams, but scented formulas might actually be doing more harm than good. "Avoid at all costs products with strong fragrance or alcohol as an ingredient," says [Dr. Nava Greenfield](#), board-certified dermatologist at Schweiger Dermatology Group. "These ingredients, although they may feel wonderful and smell nice when applied, will in the longer term contribute to skin dryness and add to the risk of eczema and rashes."

Dr. Greenfield recommends fragrance-free creams and ointments with moisture-locking ingredients. This Neutrogena hand cream checks all the boxes and contains glycerin, a tried-and-true ingredient for trapping moisture. "It's very easy to apply and does not leave a heavy, oily consistency," says Dr. Greenfield.

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**Strong Exfoliators**

## CeraVe Skin-Renewing Nightly Exfoliating Treatment

 CeraVe Skin Renewing Nightly Exfoliating Treatment

Credit: Amazon

~~\$30~~  
**\$21 at Amazon**

Exfoliators might feel like they're doing wonders, sloughing away dry, flaky patches, but at the end of the day, they can be pretty harsh on delicate skin. "Strong exfoliating ingredients can make dry skin worse, like high-concentration glycolic or salicylic acid," says Dr. Greenfield.

This doesn't mean you should completely eliminate exfoliators from your skin care routine. Instead, Dr. Greenfield suggests switching

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wash.” She recommends this CeraVe exfoliator for its low 5 percent concentration of glycolic and lactic acids. Also, “it helps hydrate skin using three ceramides, adding back important molecules for skin health that it exfoliates away.”

## Avoid: Rich, Lathering Soaps

## Use Instead: Sulfate-Free Body Wash

### Aveeno Calm + Restore Body Wash

 Aveeno Calm + Restore Daily Body Wash

Credit: Target

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~~\$17~~  
**\$13 at Amazon**

leading to dry, itchy skin. Sulfates like sodium lauryl sulfate are top offenders because they erode the skin's natural moisture barrier.

If you're using soap with lathering ingredients, Dr. Greenfield recommends swapping it for a sulfate-free formula like this Aveeno body wash. It contains zero sulfates, and it's also free of other common irritants like dyes and fragrances. Although you won't get the thick, rich foam you might love from other body washes, your skin will thank you for it by the end of the season.

## **Avoid: Strong Retinol Treatments**

## **Use Instead: Gentle Skin-Renewing Creams**

### **Matter of Monday Anti-Stress Renewal Moisturizer**



Credit: Amazon

~~\$52~~  
**\$44 at Amazon**

Many people swear by retinol products when it comes to anti-aging, but [Dr. Debbie Palmer](#) says retinol can irritate the skin and exacerbate dryness in the winter. “Retinol accelerates cell turnover, so it can sometimes lead to dryness, redness, and flakiness of the skin,” she says. It’s especially prevalent during winter months when harsh conditions are already sapping your skin of precious moisture.

If you suspect your retinol treatment is parching your skin, opt for a skin-renewing lotion with a gentler formula that contains loads of hydrating ingredients. Dr. Palmer recommends this Matter of Monday moisturizer, a lightweight formula infused with microalgae extract, aloe, and hyaluronic acid to soothe and quench your skin.

## Grown Alchemist Restorative Hand Cream

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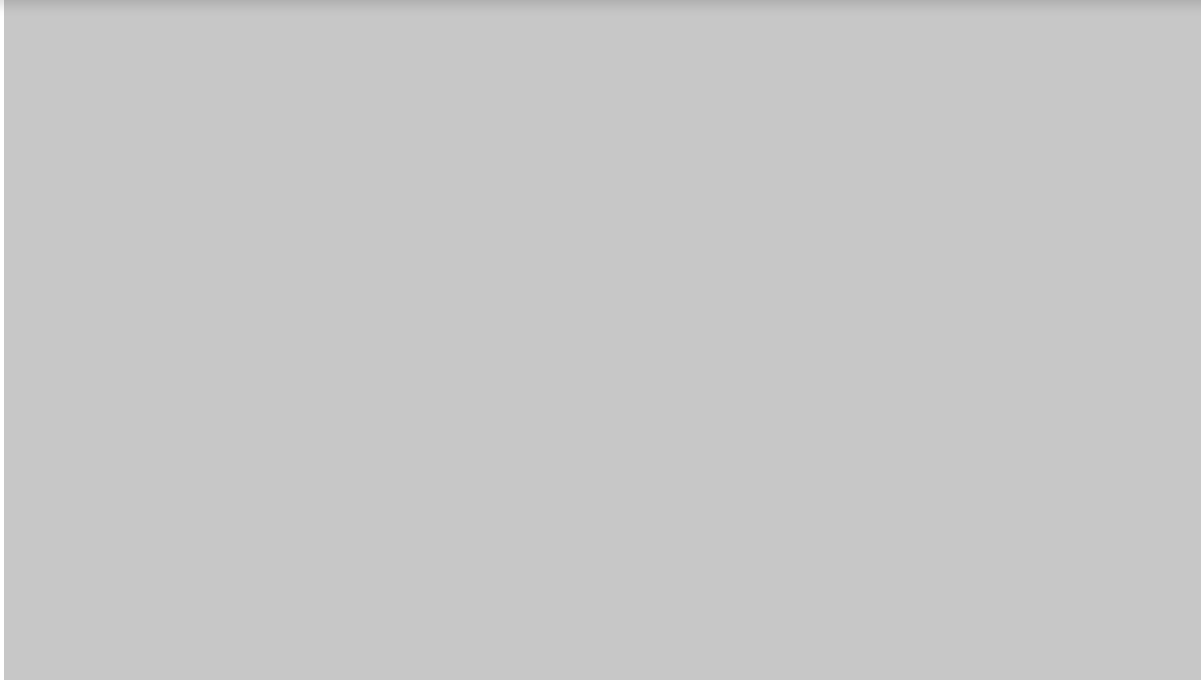
\$26 at Amazon

## The Ordinary Glycolic Acid 7% Exfoliating Toner

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## **Vanicream Gentle Body Wash**

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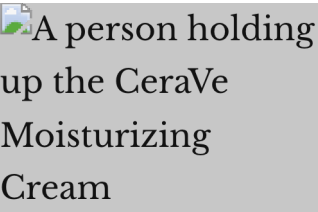
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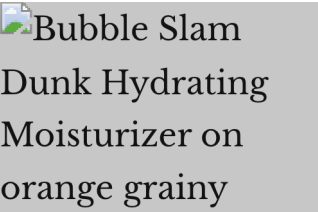
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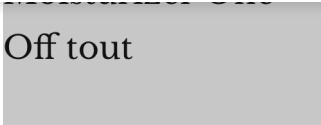
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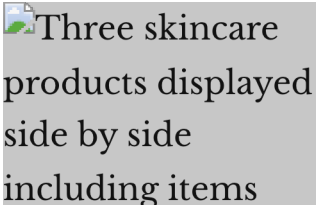
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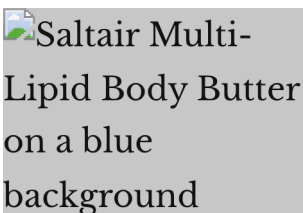
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Three skincare products displayed side by side including items

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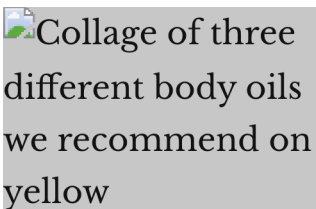
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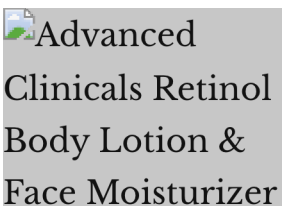
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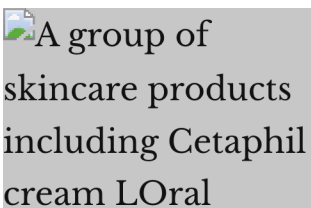
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