

# How You Should Really Be Exfoliating This Winter

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Date: November 8th, 2016

URL: <http://www.nylon.com/articles/how-to-exfoliate-during-winter>

## So your skin can survive anything

I don't know about you, but as soon as the temperature dips below 70 degrees, my skin heads straight into winter mode. The extra-dry flakiness sets in, and I do my best to slough it off in the shower before covering myself in an inch-thick layer of body butter. But while the cold temps (and the wind, and winter weather in general) are one thing that can set your skin into a dry spiral, the heat indoors is another. Have you ever noticed that things get extra staticky in winter? It's because everything is so dry. The heat that keeps you comfortable indoors also sucks all the moisture out of everything—including your skin.

One commonly known way to keep your skin looking its best all winter is to exfoliate that dry flaky skin off and heavily moisturize so it will stay soft and supple. The problem is, though, that there can feel like a million different ways to exfoliate. Should you be using a mesh cloth? One of those drugstore apricot scrubs? An acidic toner? What's the right way??

To get to the bottom of it all, I chatted with board-certified dermatologist, medical director and co-founder of Dermatology Associates of New York and founder of Replere, Dr. Debbie Palmer, and Dr. Gary Goldfaden, founder of Goldfaden MD skincare.

## Does everyone really need to exfoliate?

The answer to that is a simple yes. Pretty emphatically, both doctors suggest that everyone exfoliate in order to slough off dead skin cells that are hanging around and get rid of excess dirt your cleanser won't remove, all while making room for fresh cells to flourish. Plus, as Dr. Palmer says, exfoliating helps your skin absorb your moisturizer, serums, and whatever else is involved in your skin-care routine, which is especially important during the colder months.

If you aren't already on the exfoliation train, one solid reason to start, that both doctors mentioned, is that it decreases breakouts. Dr. Palmer explains: "When we exfoliate, our superficial skin cells send signals to the layers of cells below to increase new cell production. This speeds up cell renewal and returns our radiance or youthful glow."

### **What makes winter different?**

Realistically, you should be exfoliating all year round, but it becomes even more important when the winter weather makes things extra dry. With that in mind, don't go whole hog and start scrubbing your face too hard. Dr. Goldfaden says to "beware of over-exfoliating, as your skin is more prone dryness, redness, and the wind burn outside. Exfoliate less frequently and always make sure you're replacing hydration on the skin."

That hydration? It's the moisturizer that you should be using over your whole body to keep your skin hydrated and comfortable. To keep up with winter dryness, Dr. Palmer suggests applying moisturizer during the afternoon and evening which is when our skin loses the most moisture.

### **Flaky face no more**

So now you're probably ready to make exfoliation part of your skin-care routine. But, I hear you asking, how do I actually exfoliate? Both doctors recommend going gentle on your face. The skin is much thinner on your visage than the rest of your body, so you need to be careful not to overdo it, especially during winter.

The best way to keep from over exfoliating is to start small and work your way up. That means: Start with a gentle exfoliant, and as your skin gets comfortable with that routine, you can try some of the stronger stuff. Dr. Palmer says her favorite way to exfoliate is with "an alpha or beta hydroxy acid. Ingredients that I often recommend to patients for exfoliation include glycolic, salicylic, and azelaic acids."

Dr. Goldfaden agrees and adds that fruit acids and manual exfoliation using a product with a perfectly round "abrasion vehicle" (aka the beads or crystals in a scrub) are your best bet.

### **Drop the apricot!**

I know that apricot scrub may smell amazing and let you experience some good old-fashioned high school nostalgia, but you probably shouldn't use it on your face. Remember Dr. Goldfaden's note on perfectly round abrasion vehicles? It's because abrasive scrubs with an uneven texture can cause more damage than good.

Dr. Palmer says, "Some of the ingredients used to make scrubs abrasive can cause small microscopic tears in the skin that lead to skin inflammation." Dr. Goldfaden adds that the worst exfoliants are ones with jagged edges, like scrubs involving sugar, salt, or bamboo.

If you love scrubs with some texture, Dr. Goldfaden suggests jojoba beads instead. “Jojoba beads, derived from the seeds of the jojoba plant, are small and uniform in size and shape, so they are less likely to irritate, cut, or abrade your skin.”

## **Exfoliation and your skin type**

You know you should be exfoliating, but how often? And how do you make sure you don't over-exfoliate? Dr. Goldfaden makes it pretty simple. He says if you have oily skin, you likely have thicker skin than someone whose is dry. So, the oilier your skin, the more you should be able to handle stronger exfoliants.

He continues on to say that “those with drier, sensitive skin should generally use products with smaller granules such as jojoba beads or ground oatmeal.”

## **You can still use those mesh gloves**

That's all well and good for gentle exfoliation on your face, but what about the rest of your bod? Because the skin on your body is thicker and tougher than on your face, you can amp up the exfoliation a bit.

Dr. Goldfaden suggests exfoliating with a product that uses both chemical (AHA or BHA) as well as physical beads if you are prone to bacne. He also says that if bacne isn't your top concern that you can use those exfoliating mitts or a body scrub to keep your body smooth and soft.

## **Some favorite products**

After getting the exfoliation lowdown I had to know, what our doctors use themselves to exfoliate.

Dr. Goldfaden's favorite for the face (and décolleté area for ladies) is his own Goldfaden MD Skincare Doctors Scrub. He says, “Doctors Scrub is unique as it removes dead skin cells but also provides hydrating emollients back to the skin.” Dr. Goldfaden also uses the Fresh-a-Peel for a chemical exfoliant and Kate Somerville's Exfoli-Kate Body Intensive for the body.

Dr. Palmer likes to get her exfoliation done while she cleanses her face. She prefers a chemical exfoliant and recommends one with “glycolic, salicylic and azelaic acids. These ingredients can be found in Replere Deep Clean & Clarify Face Wash.”

Some other exfoliants that are NYLON faves include the Fresh Sugar Face Polish, S.W. Basics Exfoliant, Peter Thomas Roth Pumpkin Enzyme Mask, and the M-61 PowerGlow Peel. Happy sloughing.

