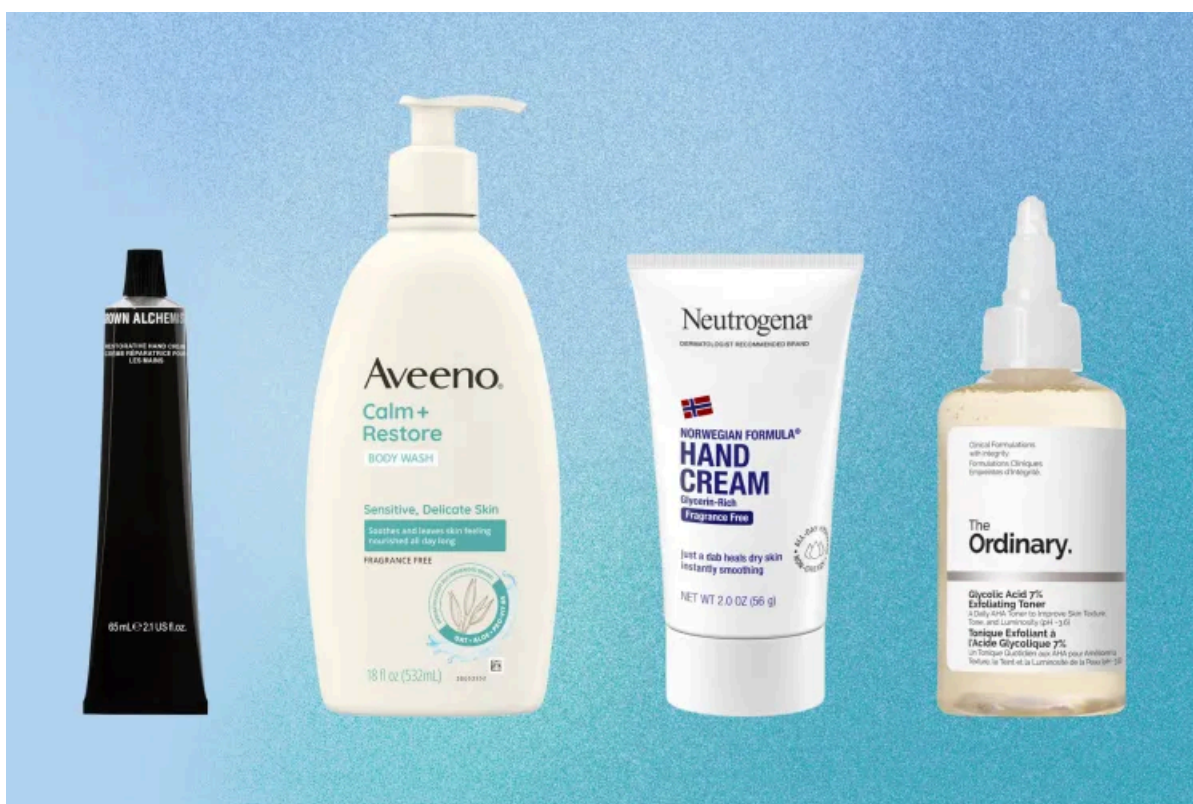


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Dermatologists Reveal the Products That Make Skin Worse in Winter—and What You Should Use Instead

Picks from Cetaphil, CeraVe, and Vanicream.

By [Mina Hochberg](#) | Published on November 16, 2025 01:00AM 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); [amazon.com](#).
- [CeraVe Skin-Renewing Nightly Exfoliating Treatment](#), \$22 (was \$30); [amazon.com](#).
- [Aveeno Calm + Restore Body Wash](#), \$13; [target.com](#).
- [Matter of Monday Anti-Stress Renewal Moisturizer](#), \$36 (was \$52); [amazon.com](#).
- [Grown Alchemist Restorative Hand Cream](#), \$26; [amazon.com](#).
- [The Ordinary Glycolic Acid 7% Exfoliating Toner](#), \$13; [amazon.com](#).
- [Vanicream Gentle Body Wash](#), \$12; [amazon.com](#).
- [Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser](#), \$12; [walmart.com](#).
- [The Ordinary Natural Moisturizing Factors + HA](#), \$14; [amazon.com](#).

Avoid: Scented Products

Use Instead: Fragrance-Free Products With Emollients

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Neutrogena Norwegian Formula Moisturizing Hand Cream

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

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Avoid: Strong Exfoliators

Use Instead: Low-Concentration Glycolic Treatments

CeraVe Skin-Renewing Nightly Exfoliating Treatment

 CeraVe Skin Renewing Nightly Exfoliating Treatment

Credit: Amazon

~~\$30~~
\$22 at Amazon

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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 winter skin care routine. Instead, Dr. Greenfield suggests switching to a gentler formula. “If you want to use exfoliators, you can use a lower concentration alpha or beta hydroxy acid, like a gentle glycolic serum or 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



Credit: Target

\$13 at Target

I personally love sudsy body washes, but Dr. Greenfield says ingredients that create those luxurious lathers can also strip away natural skin oils—leading to dry, itchy skin. Sulfates like sodium lauryl sulfate are top offenders because they erode 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

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Matter of Monday Anti-Stress Renewal Moisturizer

 Matter of Monday Anti-Stress Renewal Moisturizer

Credit: Amazon

~~\$52~~
\$36 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.

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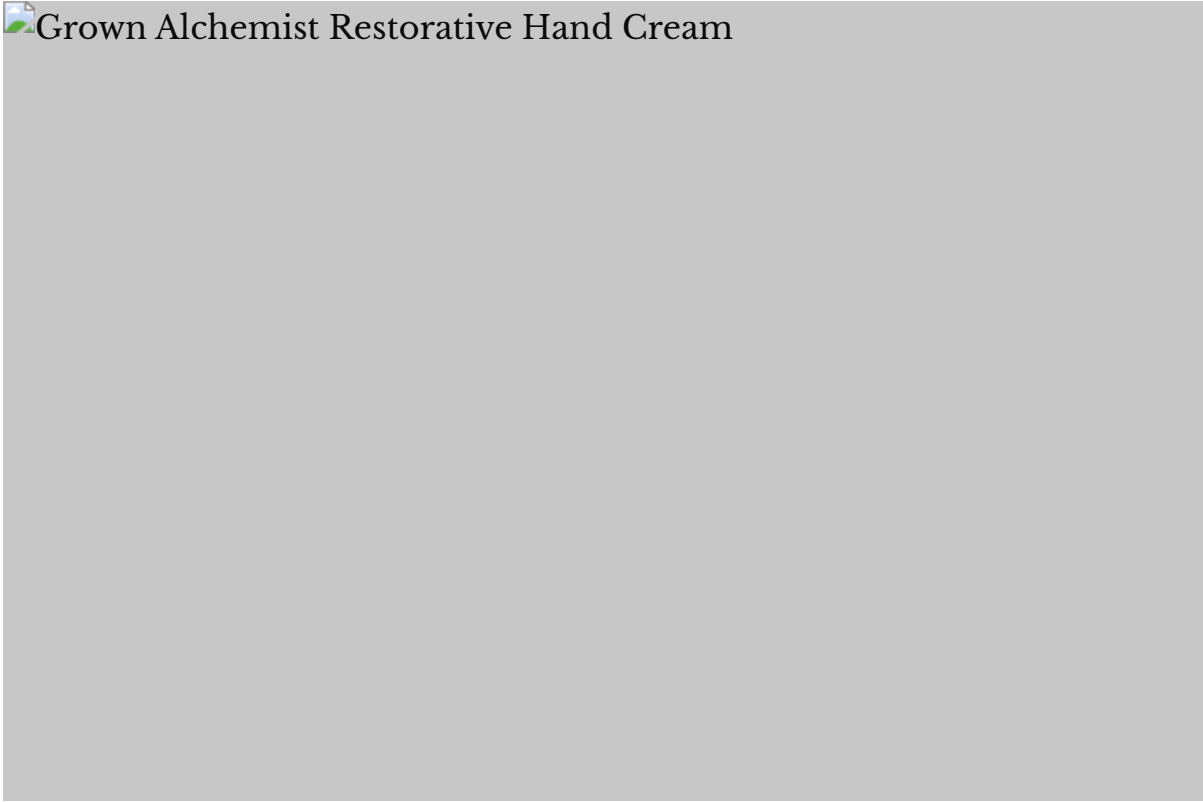
If your retinol treatment is parching your skin, opt for a skin-
son with a gentler formula that contains loads of hydrating

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hyaluronic acid to soothe and quench your skin.

Grown Alchemist Restorative Hand Cream

 Grown Alchemist Restorative Hand Cream



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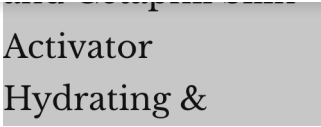
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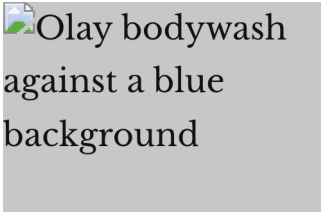
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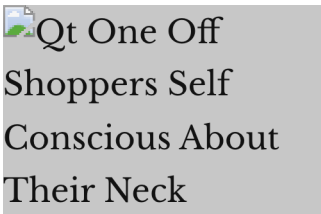


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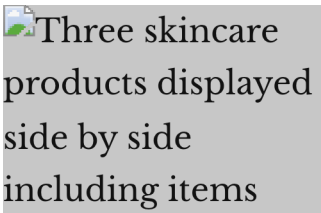


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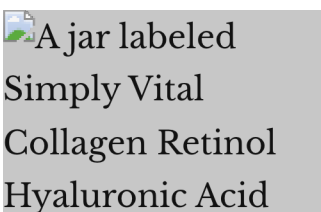


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Hyaluronic Acid

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