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Contrary to the popular jingle, Jack Frost doesn't just nip—he often bites. And, far from attacking just your nose, he targets the largest organ you possess—your skin.

The bitter cold and blistering winds of winter can quickly strip skin of its moisture, **leaving it prone to itching, cracking and bleeding. Broken skin is a recipe for infection, says Rebecca Baxt, M.D., a board certified dermatologist and fellow of the American Academy of Dermatology.**

Even the welcoming warmth of a climate-controlled building adds to your skin's suffering. According to James C. Marotta, a Long Island-based facial plastic surgeon, the same heating system that keeps your house toasty also sucks much of the moisture out of the air.

Six skin-saving strategies

Baxt and Marotta offer six essential cold-weather skin protection tips:

Make sure to moisturize: There's no better cure for winter skin woes than a bottle of your go-to moisturizer. "It's critical that people, especially elderly people, moisturize their skin in the winter months, says Baxt, who suggests applying moisturizer immediately after showering. She also says that, while lotion may provide enough protection for some people, seniors might want to seek out heavier creams or ointments. Just be sure to check the ingredients. Many heavy-duty moisturizers contain lanolin—a common allergen for the elderly. Vaseline petroleum jelly can be a skin saver—if you can get over the greasiness. Marotta offers the following tip for making moisturizers more effective: after application, immediately cover the area with clothing (i.e. pants, shirt, gloves, socks) to enhance absorption and prevent evaporation.

Don't forget to drink: By the time December rolls around, sweat-inducing temperatures may seem like a distant memory, but don't assume that cooler weather means you can skimp on hydration. Keep your fluid consumption consistent—Marotta suggests sticking to eight glasses of water a day. One way to know if you're getting enough water is to check your urine color. Unless you're on certain medications that may affect your urine hues, aim for shades that lie somewhere in the range of pale-to-moderately-yellow.