

# Dermatologist tips for managing dry, cracked heels in winter weather

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(HealthDay)—Dry, cracked heels are common in the winter, but there

are several ways to prevent and treat the problem, a skin specialist says.

"Cold, [dry weather](#), walking barefoot, and long, hot showers are just some of the reasons why you may have dry, cracked heels this winter," dermatologist Dr. Patrick Blake said in an American Academy of Dermatology news release.

"Understanding what causes dry, cracked heels and taking steps to prevent them can relieve the itch and pain that they can cause and leave you with softer, healthier skin this [winter](#)," he added.

Blake offered a number of tips:

- Limit baths and showers to five to 10 minutes. Bathing or showering for too long can dry out your skin and make dry, cracked heels worse. Gently blot your skin dry with a towel.
- Use a gentle, fragrance-free cleanser to help your feet retain their natural oils.
- Moisturize within five minutes of bathing with a moisturizing cream that contains 10% to 25% urea, alpha hydroxy acid or salicylic acid. Apply it immediately after bathing and whenever your heels feel dry.
- Before bed, apply plain petroleum jelly to your heels. It's a good idea to wear socks to protect your bedding.
- Apply a liquid bandage over [heel](#) cracks during the day to create a protective barrier that can help reduce pain, speed healing, and block germs from getting into your [skin](#).
- Wear proper footwear. If you have dry, cracked heels, avoid open-heeled shoes such as flip-flops or slingbacks, worn-down shoes, or shoes that don't fit properly.

"Sometimes, cracked heels are caused by a [medical condition](#), such as diabetes," Blake said. "If your dry, cracked heels are severe or do not

improve after following these tips, talk to a board-certified dermatologist."

**More information:** There's more on the causes and care of dry skin at the [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#).

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