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NOVEMBER 2005

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## Sensitivity Survival Kit: What Your Skin Needs



Really Sensitive

Sometimes Sensitive

**Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser, \$11** (CVS and other drugstores), and a daily moisturizer without harsh active ingredients (such as alpha hydroxy acids, retinols, vitamin C), like **Dermadoctor Calm Cool & Corrected 2N1 Rosacea Tx, \$85** (select Sephora, 877-737-4672, or [dermadoctor.com](http://dermadoctor.com)).

Don't forget a non-chemical sunscreen with

**Product overuse is the number one reason your skin may be extra sensitive.\***

micronized zinc oxide or titanium dioxide (these formulas block the sun's rays, whereas chemical ones

absorb them and tend to be more irritating). We like **Neutrogena Sensitive Skin Sunblock Lotion SPF 30, \$8.99** (Walgreens and other drugstores). If you develop acne or sunspots, see a dermatologist rather than troubleshoot yourself.

### You're sometimes sensitive.

"While very few women truly have chronically sensitive skin, most will temporarily have sensitive skin at some point in their lives," says Dr. Bank.

"It can be caused by any external changes that dry out or injure your outer skin layer to the point where it can't function properly and it starts reacting to things it could tolerate before," explains Heidi Waldorf, MD, director of Laser and Cosmetic Dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center.

A change from humid summer weather to dry winter weather, for instance, can trigger temporary skin sensitivity. More often,

though, it's self-inflicted, says Brad Katchen, MD, assistant professor of clinical dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center. "People are abusing their skin by overusing home peels and retinols and scrubs," he explains. "This strips the outer layer and can cause the skin to become inflamed."

**Your skin Rx:** Take a break from your usual regimen and switch to gentle products for at least a month so your skin can recuperate. Try **Dove Sensitive Essentials Non-Foaming Cleansing Lotion, \$6.49** (Duane Reade and other drugstores).

"Once your skin has calmed down, you can add in acne or anti-aging products if you need them—as long as you use the sensitive formulas," says Dr. Bank. We like **Eucerin Conceal & Heal Treatment Pencil, \$8.49** (Target and drugstores), and **Olay Total Effects 7X Visible Anti-Aging Vitamin Complex, \$19.99** (Rite Aid and other drugstores). Howard Fein, MD, a dermatologist and clinical instructor at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, recommends **La Roche-Posay Effaclar K Acne Treatment Fluid, \$28** ([laroche-posay.us](http://laroche-posay.us) for physicians), and, for younger-looking skin, **Replenix Serum CF, \$54** (800-445-2595 for dermatologists or [skinstore.com](http://skinstore.com)).

If you've really overworked your skin, try **Kiehl's Dermatologist Solutions Centella Recovery Skin-Salve, \$42** (Kiehl's, 800-543-4572, or [kiehls.com](http://kiehls.com)), a soothing, über-rich ointment.

Once your skin flare-ups subside, return to your usual products, one at a time. If an old favorite triggers a reaction, give it up for good. —CHRISTINE FELLINGHAM

## Sensitivity Training

"Not every product that's labeled sensitive really is," warns Dr. Litt. "A lot of these claims are just nonsense." Here's what dermatologists say you need to know to find the real deal.

### GO FRAGRANCE FREE.

"Synthetic fragrance is the number-one irritant," says Dr. Waldorf. Look for labels that say "fragrance free"—not "unscented." "If you see 'unscented' on the label," explains Dr. Bank, "that product can still contain 'masking fragrances' to cover up an unpleasant aroma."

### CHOOSE CREAMS AND LOTIONS.

"They contain more emollients, which tend to be soothing," explains Dr. Waldorf. "Gels are more drying and, therefore, irritating."

### DON'T FALL FOR TRENDY INGREDIENTS.

One that's popping up all over right now is "spa water" (aka Vichy water, thermal water, mineral water, etc.). "There are no studies that show that one kind of water is better for your skin than another," says Dr. Bank.

### BOTANICALS ARE NOT NECESSARILY NICER.

"Botanical products are often combinations of multiple ingredients, increasing the chances of irritation," says Dr. Waldorf. "After all, poison ivy is a natural botanical!" —CF