

Skin and its Care

By Phyllis Naegeli



¹ Did you know that the skin is the largest organ of the human body? Our skin is an amazing part of us. It is less than 2 millimeters thick, but within its three layers there is an unseen world.

² The first layer, called the epidermis, starts with what we see on the surface. Most of this is either dead or dying cells, millions of which are rubbed off each day. During an average lifetime, up to 100 pounds of skin cells are shed. Also contained within this layer is keratin, a substance which makes our skin strong, flexible, and waterproof. Without it, we would be like a soggy, wet paper towel. The color of our skin is determined by melanin, a brown pigment found in the epidermis as well. The more melanin a person has, the darker their skin will be.



³ Under the epidermis, we find the dermis. Here are the sweat glands, hair follicles, blood vessels, nerves, and touch sensors. In one square inch of our skin, there are nearly twenty feet of blood vessels. Stretched out, they would be as long as three cars parked end to end. The sweat glands and hair follicles start here and travel all the way up through the epidermis to the outer layer of the skin. Sweat glands release sweat onto the skin's surface through tiny openings called pores to keep our bodies cool. Hair follicles have glands associated with them that make a natural oil called sebum. This oil helps to keep our skin soft and supple. Attached to hair follicles are tiny muscles that react to cold or a fright, making our hair stand on end and causing goose bumps.

⁴ A layer of fatty tissue under the dermis is called the hypodermis. This third layer of skin is where fat cells are stored to assist in conserving body temperature. This fat layer also helps to provide nourishment to the other two layers and aids in preventing trauma to the internal organs.

⁵ The sense of touch is found in our skin. The nerve endings and touch sensors are located in the dermis where they detect touch and register pain. Specialized nerve endings that detect light pressure are found in the upper area of the dermis, while those that detect heavy pressure are further down in this layer. Touch is an important part of our lives. Without these sensors, we wouldn't feel a hug or know we had burned our fingers.

⁶ Care of our skin is an important part of our daily lives. Because our skin provides protection from the elements around us, we need to take special care of

this large organ. Cuts and scrapes need to be cleaned and protected. Hydrogen peroxide should be used to clean a wound, and it's fun to watch it bubble. After a cut is clean, apply an antibacterial cream or ointment and cover it up with a bandage. From fluorescent pink to clear, there's a bandage available to suit your personal style.

⁷ Our skin should be kept clean and moisturized. Long, hot showers can actually deplete your skin of moisture. A short, warm shower is best for your skin. Gently towel your skin until it is almost dry, then applying a light moisturizer, will help to keep it soft. Some areas of your body, such as the hands, feet, knees, and elbows, can be more difficult to keep supple. Use of a heavier moisturizer on these areas is recommended. In drier climates, or during drier times of the year, an indoor humidifier can be a great help in keeping your skin moist. Moisture from our skin evaporates faster into dry air.

⁸ To protect our skin from the harmful UV rays of the sun, a sunscreen should be used on all exposed skin. This is a good practice to pursue all year round. Sunburns have been known to happen on ski slopes in winter, as well as beaches in summer.

⁹ Our skin is a large part of our bodies. Keeping informed on its proper care is very important to our overall health.

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| <p>1. The upper layer of skin that we see is called:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A The elastic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B The epic</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C The epidermis</p> | <p>2. What does keratin do?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
| <p>3. Very hot showers will help to keep our skin moisturized.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A False</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B True</p> | <p>4. The more ____ you have in your skin, the darker your skin will be.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |

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| <p>5. About how thick is human skin?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A 2 inches</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B 2 millimeters</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C 2 centimeters</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D 2 feet</p> | <p>6. Moisturizers applied to dry skin will work best to help keep skin soft.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A False</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B True</p> |
| <p>7. The dermis contains:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Hair follicles</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Nerve endings</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Blood vessels</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Sweat glands</p> <p><input type="radio"/> E All of the above</p> | <p>8. The skin is the largest organ in the body.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A False</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B True</p> |

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| <p>9. The _____ layer of the skin provides nourishment to the dermis and the epidermis.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> | <p>10. Goose bumps happen because we are:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> A Cold or scared</p> <p><input type="radio"/> B Warm or happy</p> <p><input type="radio"/> C Happy or content</p> <p><input type="radio"/> D Sad or cold</p> <p><input type="radio"/> E None of the above</p> <p><input type="radio"/> F All of the above</p> |
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