



## Sensitive Skin

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Sensitive skin? Approximately 50% of individuals characterize themselves as having “sensitive skin”. Although there is no consensus among physicians, patients, or skin care industry, most people will attribute itching, redness, hives, irritation, dryness, or scaling reactions to skin care products. The bottom line is that all symptoms and descriptions share a common inflammatory reaction.

An allergy refers to an immune response, which will occur only in those who are sensitive or react to a specific ingredients, drug or substance. In most cases, an allergic reaction affects the body both internally and externally. A classic example of a systemic allergic reaction is seen with oral antibiotics, such as penicillin and sulfa drugs. In extreme drug reactions, symptoms can involve generalized itching, rash or sloughing of the skin. A classic example of a skin or localized allergy, known as allergic contact dermatitis, can be seen with certain metals, especially nickel jewelry, and with ingredients in skin and hair care products. Symptoms of an allergic contact dermatitis can include itching, burning sensation, blisters, and rash. In most cases, systemic and localized allergic reactions will need to be treated by a physician. If an allergic reaction is the result of an unknown etiology, a board-certified dermatologist can perform specialized testing, known as Patch Tests, to determine the offending culprit of an allergic contact dermatitis, or a board-certified allergist can perform allergy testing to determine internal allergens.

An irritant reaction is the most common reaction experienced by most individuals, and is dependent upon the product concentration, thickness of the skin and length of contact of the offending agent. Irritant reactions generally do not involve the immune system and the reaction is commonly localized to the site of the exposure. For example, classic irritant reactions are experienced when the skin is exposed to concentrated ingredients, such as cleaning agents. Symptoms of irritant reactions include: itching, dry skin, burns or rashes. The skin will slowly heal once the offending agent has been removed. Consult with a board-certified dermatologist if the reaction does not begin to resolve in a few days. Keep in mind that occasionally, both allergic and irritant reactions can occur in the same individual at the same time, such as reactions seen with soap and detergents.

Did you know seasonal allergies, such as eczema, asthma, hay fever, and sinusitis, are allergic reactions to environmental elements, such as dust and pollen?