

Bathing: Avoid Drying Out

Handout 2

Bathing is essential to good hygiene. But bathing removes natural oils from your skin, which can result in dryness and irritation. To minimize the drying effects of bathing, follow these steps:

- **Bathe once a day.** Bathing once a day is generally enough to maintain good hygiene. If your complexion is very oily, you live in a warm and humid environment or you're physically active, twice a day may be more appropriate. If you have dry skin, bathing every other day may be best.
- **Use warm water and limit bath time.** Hot water and long showers or baths remove even more oil. Limit your bath or shower time to about 15 minutes or less. And use warm, rather than hot, water.
- **Use appropriate soaps.** Choose mild, superfatted soaps, which are products that have oils and fats added to them just after the soap manufacturing process. Add bath oils, which are very moisturizing, to your bath. Consider using a soap substitute. These products vary, but may include a mild synthetic detergent or an oil mixed with a wetting agent (surfactant). They typically come in a bar, gel or liquid form and are less drying than are deodorant and anti-bacterial detergents or soaps. If you have dry or sensitive skin, use soap only on your face, underarms, genital area and hands and feet.
- **Pat dry.** After bathing, gently pat or blot your skin dry with a towel so that some moisture remains on the skin. Immediately moisturize your skin with an oil or cream.