Better Homes & Gardens

Cool CALM & decluttered
REAL-LIFE ORGANIZING IDEAS

plus We love soup: winter comfort in a bowl
YOUR EXFOLIATING HABITS

Exfoliation is generally a good thing because it removes dead skin cells that make skin look dull.

But if you do it too often, are too abrasive, or combine multiple exfoliators, “You risk stripping away the natural oils and healthy bacteria that keep your skin balanced. And that can lead to irritation,” says Whitney Bowe, M.D., dermatologist and author of The Beauty of Dirty Skin. If your skin is inflamed, quit exfoliating until it returns to normal. Then rethink how you exfoliate. Pick one method—a scrub with soft or rounded particles, a washcloth, or a cleansing tool—but don’t use them together, Bowe says. (Try St. Ives Gentle Smoothing Oatmeal Scrub & Mask, $5; drugstores.)

Finally, limit exfoliation to twice a week, max. “Most people can’t tolerate more than that,” Bowe says.

calm skin

ALL WINTER

Is your face red, dry, or itchy? The key to soothing the irritation lies in figuring out what, exactly, caused your skin to freak out. Here, a few clues.

NATURAL SENSITIVITIES

Sensitive skin might be a clue that you have a skin condition that has not been diagnosed. For example, the tendency to blush or flush, along with persistent redness on your cheeks, forehead, and chin, are common signs of rosacea. Eczema also causes irritation and dry, flaky skin. Both conditions are best treated under a dermatologist’s care. However, pink, dry skin that isn’t that itchy may just be a reaction to certain ingredients or a sign that your skin care routine is too aggressive. In that case, dial back and use products labeled fragrance-free or designed for baby skin or eczema, which are less likely to upset skin, Bowe says. (Try Aveeno Eczema Therapy Moisturizing Cream, $12; drugstores.)

If you had eczema, allergies, or asthma as a child, you’ll be prone to sensitive skin as an adult.

THE DRYING ENVIRONMENT

Cold air equals dry air. If the air is dry, it sucks the moisture out of the skin and compromises the skin barrier,” says Boston-based dermatologist Emmy Grober, M.D., referring to the layer of skin that defends against irritants and holds in moisture. Weakening this layer leaves skin vulnerable to irritation. Indoor heating can have a similarly drying effect, creating a lose-lose situation for skin in the winter. To keep your skin barrier strong and functioning properly, use a cream with ingredients that help trap and retain moisture like ceramides, hyaluronic acid, or both. (Try CeraVe Moisturizing Lotion, $12; drugstores.)