

what's the skin barrier?

here's everything you need to know.



story highlights

- The skin barrier helps protect the skin, keeping water in and pollutants out.
 - A damaged skin barrier can lead to sensitive skin.
 - Ceramides can help bring hydration back to the skin so it appears nourished and smooth.
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The skin barrier. Chances are you've heard the term. But you may not know what it is, exactly — until now! If you have sensitive skin, you may be more familiar with the skin barrier than you even knew already, since (we're sorry to say) it might be compromised. But never fear: fixing a damaged skin barrier is a straightforward process. Read on for everything you need to know.

So, what is the skin barrier, anyway?

The skin barrier — otherwise known as the lipid barrier, or the skin's natural moisture barrier — helps protect the skin by keeping water in and pollutants out. The skin barrier takes on three essential jobs:

- It helps protect your body from external stressors (like pollution and UV radiation).
- It retains water, which helps keep your skin hydrated.
- It transports nutrients to your skin.

How do you know whether your skin barrier is healthy or not?

If your skin is hydrated, plump, and smooth, you likely have a healthy skin barrier. You'll also find that your skin tends to be less sensitive when your skin barrier is functioning properly.

However, when your skin barrier is not functioning properly — i.e. when it's damaged — your skin will be susceptible to further damage. You may find your skin feels sensitive or is dehydrated, dull, or dry, or that your skin isn't defending itself against outside aggressors like free radicals (which can lead to fine lines and wrinkles).

Can having a damaged skin barrier lead to more sensitive skin?

In a word, yes. Sensitive skin has many causes, like genetics, stress, hormone changes, skin conditions, or environmental stressors. But, frequently, sensitive skin is a direct result of a damaged lipid barrier. It stands to reason, then, that to fix sensitive skin, you need to fix the damaged skin barrier. (An aha moment, right?)

You might notice that your skin is more dry, flaky, irritated, or itchy. You could also experience rashes, or that products you apply leave behind a tingling or burning sensation.

Just like sensitive skin, a damaged skin barrier can have many causes — like environmental factors (sun exposure, pollution), physical (exfoliating your skin too much or using products that are too harsh), and genetics. And let's not forget one of the most important things to consider when looking at the skin barrier — ceramides.

tell me more about ceramides.

Ceramides are one of the key components of the skin's lipid barrier. Here are a few things to note:

- Skin produces its own ceramides to help rebuild the skin barrier.
- Some skin care ingredients can help with this process.
- The lipid bilayer of the skin is comprised of ceramides (50%), cholesterol (25%), and fatty acids (10-20%). When the levels of these lipids — especially ceramides — are unbalanced, the skin barrier becomes compromised.
- Ceramides, made of sphingosine bound to fatty acids, are well-known for their prominent role in the formation and maintenance of the skin barrier function. Dry, sensitive skin cannot synthesize sufficient ceramides — so one approach to improving the skin barrier is to use a topical moisturizer containing soothing ingredients to calm, moisturize, and hydrate the skin.

what are some ways to help sensitive skin?

There are a few different ways to help repair the skin's lipid barrier, effectively helping sensitive skin. They include:

- Drinking more water (aim for 8 glasses a day)
- Avoiding triggers like allergens, irritants, and pollutants
- Refraining from over-washing or over-exfoliating the skin
- Including skin products with ceramides in your skincare routine

If I have sensitive skin, what should my skincare routine include?

Moisture, moisture, moisture. In general, it's important to do two things: keep your skincare regimen simple, and make sure it includes a rich, super-hydrating moisturizer. Our pick is Stabilizing Repair Cream: its balmy-cream formula melts into skin to give it stability, relief, and a chance to recover from sensitivity. It also features a Ceramide-Building Complex that provides nourishing lipids, strengthening skin's barrier to lock in moisture and help keep signs of sensitivity at bay.

The bottom line? Keeping your lipid barrier healthy will help keep your skin hydrated and keep sensitivity at bay. Shop all products with ceramides here.

Get more skin care tips at [dermalogica.com](https://www.dermologica.com)

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