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**Scaling Down (Almost) Painlessly**

**By Phyllis Staff, Ph.D.**

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by: **Phyllis Staff, Ph.D.**

Moving to a smaller house or apartment in a retirement community almost always involves a certain degree of trauma, both for the elder who's moving and for family members. However, by planning ahead you can reduce the discomfort involved and turn what might well become a nightmare into a pleasant event.

**Begin by Planning for the Move**

Where is the elder moving? Go to the actual house or apartment with tape measure, pad and pencil and write down measurements. Floor space is important, but don't forget about ceilings. Many elders own large pieces of furniture that may not fit into rooms with low ceilings. Your work here will determine which pieces can move with your elder.

And while you're at the actual location, talk to several other elders who already live there. What is their life style? Do they go outside the property on frequent trips? How do they dress? Casual lifestyles will require an entirely different style of dress than more formal ones.

**Gather Supplies and Contact Helpers**

Having all the supplies you will need in one place will speed your task. You'll want a number of storage bins; five or six should be sufficient to hold sorted items. Plastic bags can be used for discarded belongings and as a container for articles to be donated to charities. Packing boxes and supplies such as padding materials and wide sealing tape are must-haves. Labels and dark marking pens are essential to ensure that boxes go to their intended location.

While you're in the gathering stage, begin to contact helpers you'll need. Among these may be: estate sale professionals certified appraisers moving companies house cleaners repair specialists (electricians, plumbers, carpenters, painters)

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Ask friends, relatives, and senior real estate specialists for recommendations. Also, check with the Better Business Bureau to ascertain whether problems have been reported about particular companies or individuals.

### Approach Your Task One Room at a Time

Who should help? The elder and one family member should assume responsibility for sorting all items and some packing. Do not include everyone in the family if you want to make the job quick and easy because distractions increase in geometric proportion to the number of persons doing the sorting.

Sort all the items in one single room at once, beginning and ending in the kitchen. Why start there? Because kitchens in small houses and apartments typically are short on storage space, and the elder needs time and experience to determine which items are true necessities, and which may never be

used. If you reduce kitchen items to a bare minimum at the beginning, your elder can determine what's needed and what's not by living with them ahead of time. After living with fewer items, your elder may find that items once thought essential may not be needed. Complete work in the kitchen at the very end of your tasks.

Even though you intend to stay in only one room, distractions will occur. Resist them by stacking items that belong in another room at the door. A bin or box placed just inside the door can contain all the items that have homes elsewhere.

Make your motto One Thing at a Time; One Time for each Thing. Once you've picked up an item, decide then and there what its fate should be. Place it in one of the bins you've labeled: Discards  
Donations  
Distribution to Relatives  
Keepers  
Uncertainties

Large collections of books may require their own bins. You might have bins for Collectors' editions, books to be stored, books to be sold to book dealers.

When you have finished categorizing all the items in the room, start the packing process. Items in the Uncertainties bin can be packed for storage.

If an unbreakable item is to be moved only a short distance, don't waste time on elaborate packing and padding. Items like crystal and china, however, require excellent packing, regardless of the distance they will be moved. If you can't do a great job, leave packing fragile items to professionals.

Mark boxes as you go.  
Mark boxes as you go.  
Mark boxes as you go.

Nothing is more frustrating than finding that you've shipped your elder's bed linens to Aunt Minnie and kept a silver salver you meant to send your nephew.

Don't try to do everything at once. Do only one room on any given day, and take the time to enjoy

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reminiscing as you sort items.

This is also the perfect time to have a certified appraiser come in to appraise items that may be of significant value. Very expensive items may be auctioned at an auction house such as Christy's or Sotheby's. Less expensive items can be sold to local antiques dealers. By having an idea of their value before going to dealers, you reduce the chance that dealers can scam you.

You could also consider selling items through an on-line auction. If you do so, remember that you will be responsible for shipping items and ensuring their condition to successful bidders.

### Distribute Items to the Intended Recipients

Schedule a single day for distribution of items. In-town relatives can come to pick up items intended for them; they may also be helpful by taking bags to charities, books to resellers, boxes to storage, and trash to dumps.

Use this day for shipping as well. Small items can be shipped via UPS or FedEx; large pieces of furniture and antiques may require special handling by movers. Once you've finished distribution, you

should have a considerably reduced pile of boxes and furniture. These boxes should contain only items to be moved to the elder's new residence or to storage. Remaining items should be those to be sold in an estate sale.

### Move the Elder to His New Residence

Will the mover actually show up on time? Will the mover actually show up at all? Increase the probability of a good outcome for the move by contacting the mover to confirm arrangement a week ahead and the day before the actual move is scheduled. Of course, missed appointments may still occur, but if you've checked out the company with the Better Business Bureau and reminded the company of your appointment, the chances are good that the move will go as planned.

Accompany your elder to his new residence and help him with the moving-in process. Even if not all boxes can be emptied in a single day, he will feel more comfortable if a few items that are meaningful to him are unpacked and placed where he can find them.

### Hold an Estate Sale

Once the movers have left the premises, the estate sale professionals should come in to evaluate and price items for the estate sale. Give them a key to the house, and then get out of their way. If you have chosen well, these professionals can do a great job of pricing items to sell and clearing the house of whatever remains. They will take a percentage of the sale receipts as compensation.

The days of the sale are good days to keep your elder busy elsewhere. A tearful elder does nothing to help sales.

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Schedule a professional cleaning service to clean the house once the estate sale is over. When that has been completed to your satisfaction, turn the keys over to your senior real estate professional and give yourself a big pat on the back. You're done!

Click [here](#) for a checklist to help you through this process. Or copy this address into your browser address bar.

Phyllis Staff, Ph.D. – Phyllis Staff is an experimental psychologist and the CEO of The Best Is Yet.Net, an internet company that helps seniors and caregivers find trustworthy residential care. She is the author of *How to Find Great Senior Housing: A Roadmap for Elders and Those Who Love Them*. She is also the daughter of a victim of Alzheimer's disease. Visit the author's web site at

### **Dry Skin Care Quiz**

**By Joel Walsh**

Most people who think they know all about dry skin, chapped skin, chafing, redness and other signs of skin dehydration really don't. Take this quiz to make sure you know who your skin's enemies are.

The answers are located at the end of the quiz.

1. What is *\*not\** one of the three most common skin types?

a.) Moist

b.) Normal

c.) Dry

d.) Oily

2. What is "combination skin"?

a.) Oily to dry

b.) Normal to dry

c.) Oily to moist

d.) Normal to moist

3. Which of the following is not one of the most common locations of dry skin?

a.) Lower legs

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b.) Arms

c.) Thighs

d.) Tummy (front of abdomen)

4. Scaling is a symptom of dry skin that is also most commonly called what?

a.) Chafing

b.) Flaking

c.) Cracked skin

d.) Rough skin

5. Which of the following are worst for dry skin in winter (also called "winter itch")?

a.) Fireplaces

b.) Space heaters

c.) Radiators

d.) Forced-air furnaces

6. The best skin lotions for winter itch are:

a.) Thick and greasy

b.) Light and smooth

c.) Watery and clay-textured

d.) Spray on

7. In order to avoid chafing when drying off, you should:

a.) Only dry lightly; do not dry off all moisture

b.) Dry thoroughly, but pat yourself dry rather than rubbing

c.) Allow as much of the water to evaporate as possible rather than towel-drying most of it off

d.) Dry thoroughly and vigorously to dry as fast as possible

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Answers:

1. a. moist. The most common types of skin are dry, oily, and normal. Knowing your own skin type, you can find out the bath and body lotions that will work best at moisturizing your skin.

2. c. normal to dry. Combination skin means that you have to use a product that moisturizes your skin without being so strong that it can make your skin oily.

3. d. tummy. According to Medline Plus, the most common areas of your body to suffer dry skin are the arms, lower legs, thighs and flanks (sides of abdomen).

4. b. flaking. According to Medline Plus, scaling, also called flaking, is "visible peeling or flaking of outer skin layers." Some of the worst sources of scaling are psoriasis, lichen planus, and athlete's foot.

5. d. forced-air furnaces. According to Medline Plus, dry skin is often caused by the sudden switch from cold to warm air, and in particular the warm dry air of forced-air furnaces.

6. a. thick and greasy. According to Medline Plus, thick and greasy lotions really do the best job of

holding moisture into your skin.

7. b. pat, don't rub. You have to dry off thoroughly to prevent losing skin moisture through evaporation, but rubbing the towel against your skin will damage your epidermis.

Joel Walsh is a contributing author to

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