

Cure your winter kryptonite



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What's your kryptonite? Is there anything—a trigger, a condition, a food, etc.—that affects you so greatly that you stay far away from it? Mine is gluten and I avoid it like the plague. My husband's, however, is cold, dry weather. Umm, we live in MN—where the cold, dry weather starts in November and doesn't end until April. So how do you stay away from that without moving? And what could be so bad about cold weather to be considered kryptonite? Eczema, that's what.

Every year, Jeremy's eczema gets worse and worse and spreads all over his body. He's been to many dermatologists. He's tried natural home remedies, over-the-counter lotions and potions of almost every kind, and prescribed medications that are so strong his skin thins in the areas they're used. As I watch my husband in agony due to his irritated, inflamed, extremely itchy, ruby-red raw skin, I feel completely helpless.

I've done what most would do when you watch someone suffering—Google it. But I have failed in my researching, home-remedy making and cream-buying efforts over the years ... until a few weeks ago, when I ran across a new product I had not heard of. It's called Eczema Honey. Just the name made me want to try it. And then I read the reviews—how could they all be 5-stars packed with success stories? Hope restored, I ordered a jar and

waited impatiently for it to arrive—no Amazon prime for Eczema Honey. Six days in, I received a notification that the honey had been delivered. I held my breath as Jeremy rubbed it on his skin and, like a small child, I asked over and over if he was feeling any relief. There was a little at first, but after a couple days of use, there was almost total relief as his arms, hands, torso, legs and feet all started to clear up! This golden yellow jar of goodness is a cure to my husband's winter kryptonite!

Just as the winter weather wreaks havoc on my husband's skin, it negatively affects your vehicle. Since below-zero temps took a bit longer to bring us to a deep freeze this winter, have you delayed any repairs or maintenance on your vehicle? Here are some things to consider addressing now to keep the cold weather kryptonite from affecting it in negative ways and preventing problems before they happen.

FLUIDS

Fluids thicken and/or freeze as the temperatures drop. It's that simple. The two most important fluids that can be greatly affected are your oil and coolant. Since these fluids are key for lubricating the internal components of crucial systems in your vehicle, it is essential that you are using the correct oil (and even consider switching to a full-synthetic for its additional cold weather benefits) and correct antifreeze/water mixture to prevent



fluid from freezing in your radiator. Also, as fluids age, their protective ingredients break down and the ratio of antifreeze/water may change. This is why maintenance—the changing out of fluid on a regular basis—is even more important.

BATTERY

Freezing temps cause the chemical reaction in your battery to slow down, producing less electrical current. The older the battery, the slower the reaction can be. When is the last time you had your battery replaced? On average, replacement is recommended every five years—give or take, depending on quality and use. This is why it's important to have your battery tested periodically so you can be apprised of

when it starts to decline in health and make sure you replace it before you have a dead battery that disrupts your day or leaves you stranded.

Even an internally healthy battery can falter if it's in poor condition externally. Corrosion on the terminals is caused by hydrogen gas being released from the acid in the battery and mixing with things in the atmosphere. When is the last time you looked at your battery, checking for corrosion and poor connections? Small amounts of corrosion are not typically a problem, but if it worsens, producing larger buildups, it may prevent the battery from accepting or delivering a charge, which may lead to bigger problems. If

you are a DIYer, there are “over the counter” products that can be used to remove the crusty gunk on your battery's terminals. But if you'd rather not deal with it, especially in the frigid temps, take it to the professionals who have products that not only fix the problem, but some use additional products to prevent future buildup.

RUBBER

Many tires, even “all-season” tires, are made from a rubber that hardens when exposed to negative temperatures, causing them to lose grip when you are trying to stop your vehicle. Therefore, even on all- or four-wheel drive vehicles, while they help you move, they do not effectively make you stop well. Alternately, “winter tires” are made of

a softer rubber compound that does not harden and are able to grip the roadway, making your winter driving more safe and stable.

The biggest concern in considering winter tires is cost. But do they really cost more? If you think about what your deductible might cost if you get in an accident—might that cover the cost? Additionally, if you consider the extra life you'll get out of your summer or all-season tires, swapping them out for well-performing winter tires—with both sets helping your vehicle perform at its best—you'll likely be increasing MPGs and saving money at the pump.

If winter tires are out of the question for you right now, I would encourage you to at least be sure you are checking the air in your current set since PSI, tends to decrease a pound every 10-degree drop in air temp.

There are other components of your vehicle made of rubber—namely belts and hoses. Rubber not only gets harder but it becomes more brittle in the freezing cold. This is a good reason to make sure you replace belts according to your maintenance schedule before it becomes too old, cold and brittle—possibly breaking unexpectedly. Also, replace hoses when they are recommended during assessment by your mechanic and don't take a chance by waiting and seeing how long they might last—potentially causing other problems and more expensive repairs.

Fluids, batteries and the rubber components in your vehicle are just a few things that can be affected by the frigid temps. So make sure you are mindful of these now, in the next weeks of winter and in the fall as we approach another winter. Meanwhile, if you know anyone who suffers as my husband does with a rash like eczema or even psoriasis, make sure you recommend Eczema Honey—you'll be their superhero for sure!