

Wellness Articles

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Help for a common skin disease

April is Rosacea Awareness Month.

Rosacea (say "roh-ZAY-shuh") is a common skin disease that affects people over the age of 30. It causes redness on your nose, cheeks, chin, and forehead. Some people get little bumps and pimples on the red parts of their faces. Rosacea can also cause burning and soreness in your eyes.

If your rosacea bothers you or has gotten worse, talk to your doctor. Getting treatment can help your skin look and feel better. And it may keep your rosacea from getting worse.

What causes rosacea?

Experts are not sure what causes rosacea. They know that something irritates the skin and affects the skin's immune response. It tends to affect people who have fair skin or blush easily, and it seems to run in families.

The pattern of redness on a person's face makes it easy for a doctor to diagnose rosacea. Most of the time medical tests are not needed or used.

Rosacea often flares when something causes the blood vessels in the face to expand, which causes redness. Common triggers are exercise, sun and wind exposure, hot weather, stress, spicy foods, alcohol, and hot baths. Swings in temperature from hot to cold or cold to hot can also cause a flare-up. Rosacea is not caused by heavy alcohol use, as people thought in the past. But in people who have rosacea, drinking alcohol may cause symptoms to get worse.

What are the symptoms?

People with rosacea may have:

- A flushed, red face with sensitive, dry skin that may burn or sting.
- Small bumps and pimples or acne-like breakouts.
- Skin that gets coarser and thicker, with a bumpy texture.
- Dry, red, irritated eyes.
- In rare cases, untreated rosacea may cause permanent thickening of the skin on your face or loss of vision. Most cases don't progress this far.

How is it treated?

There is no cure, but with treatment, most people can control their symptoms and keep the disease from getting worse.

Learn what triggers your flare-ups. It can help to keep a diary of what you were eating, drinking, and doing on days that the rosacea appeared. Take the diary to your next doctor visit, and discuss what you can do to help control the disease.

Your family doctor or a dermatologist can also prescribe treatments to reduce redness and breakouts.

- **Redness and breakouts** can be treated with:
 - Pills, such as low-dose antibiotics like doxycycline.
 - Skin creams that contain medicine, such as azelaic acid or metronizadole.
- **Redness from tiny blood vessels** can be treated with lasers and another light treatment called intense pulsed light (IPL).
- **Dry, sensitive skin** can be protected with products for sensitive skin, such as moisturizers and sunscreen. Stay out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. When you are outdoors, protect your face by wearing a wide-brimmed hat or visor. Use a sunscreen that is rated SPF 30 or higher every day. If your skin is dry, find a moisturizer with sunscreen.
- **Dry, red, and irritated eyes** can be treated with artificial tears or prescription eyedrops that contain a medicine such as cyclosporine.