

Rosacea

Rosacea, often called "adult acne," which it resembles, usually begins as a subtle reddening of the skin of the cheeks, nose, forehead, and/or chin that may come and go. Untreated, the reddening eventually becomes more prominent; small dilated blood vessels may appear, and bumps and pimples may form. Rosacea can also affect the eyes, resulting in a gritty feeling and making them bloodshot and watery .

Can you get rosacea from drinking too much?

Many people associate the ruddy appearance and sometimes bulbous nose of rosacea with excessive drinking. W. C. Fields had rosacea and was known to drink a lot, but alcohol does not cause rosacea. It may worsen it, however, by causing flushing. Once you have it, rosacea may be triggered by anything that flushes the face. Hot or cold weather (including sun and wind exposure), spicy foods, hot beverages, emotional stress, heavy exercise, niacin, and other medications that cause flushing are well-known triggers. The cause of rosacea is unknown. There may be a genetic component-more than a third of sufferers have relatives with it.

What is the best way to treat it? Will supplements help?

Rosacea can be controlled by antibiotics-topically applied, or even taken orally for severe flare-ups. You can also use an antibiotic cream long-term to keep rosacea at bay. Metronidazole lotion (1% formulation) is effective. No dietary supplements are known to help. Certain foods such as chocolate, yogurt, citrus fruits, and spicy foods can aggravate rosacea. Keeping a food diary can help you avoid triggers.

How should I care for my skin?

Wash your face gently with mild soap and lukewarm water-avoid hot water-and pat dry for a few minutes before applying your medication. Then wait 5 to 10 minutes before putting on any moisturizer or makeup. Men should avoid dull blades when shaving and aftershave lotions that bum or sting. Don't use alcohol, witch hazel, or astringents. Minimize sun exposure by wearing a broad-brimmed hat and sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. In the cold, use a moisturizer to prevent drying and cover your face with a scarf. Standard acne medications are no help and may make matters worse.

For more information on rosacea, a free copy of "Coping with Rosacea," and a newsletter, call 888-NO-BLUSH, or write to the:

National Rosacea Society
800 S. Northwest Highway,
Suite 200,
Barrington, Illinois, 60010

You can also go to www.rosacea.org, or email rosaceas@aol.com.