

# ROSACEA

## WHAT IT IS

Rosacea is a chronic inflammatory skin condition that affects over three million Canadians. Rosacea features can vary from one person to another as can severity. There is no known cure, but it can be managed with appropriate treatment and lifestyle changes. The central face is the most commonly affected area.

## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

The first sign may be intermittent redness or blushing. Over time, the redness may become persistent and more visible along with small blood vessels. The most common sites affected are the cheeks, nose, chin and forehead. Red small bumps and pus-filled pimples can also appear, giving skin a rough, uneven appearance. More than half of rosacea sufferers may also experience eye symptoms.

The features of rosacea can include any of the following:

- Flushing on cheeks, nose, chin, forehead
- Persistent facial redness
- Red lines, due to enlarged blood vessels
- Pimplelike bumps and pustules without blackheads or whiteheads
- Skin swelling and thickening
- Dry skin
- Burning, stinging or itching

## CAUSES

Experts are not sure about specific causes of rosacea, but they believe it is due to both genetic and environmental factors. There is evidence that the immune system is hyperactive in response to usual environmental stimuli in those with rosacea.



## RISK FACTORS

**Rosacea usually develops in young adults and presents between ages 30 and 50. It affects both men and women and is most easily visible in those with fair skin, such as people of northern and eastern European descent (e.g. Irish, English, Scottish), although rosacea can develop in people with any skin colour.**



## TRIGGERS

Several lifestyle factors may cause rosacea to flare. Triggers vary from person to person, so it is both important and helpful to find out which ones make your own symptoms flare up.

**Food and beverages:** What you eat and drink can affect rosacea symptoms. Monitor your reaction to common trigger foods/drinks:

- Hot beverages such as soup, hot chocolate
- Caffeinated beverages such as tea, coffee
- Spicy seasonings such as white or black pepper
- Paprika, red pepper, cayenne
- Alcohol, especially red wine

**Sun exposure:** Exposure to UV light seems to make rosacea worse. Try to avoid the sun at peak times, primarily between 11am and 3pm, wear hats and use sunblock daily with a minimum SPF of 30.

**Temperature extremes:** Extremely hot or cold temperatures, very dry or humid air, wind and indoor heat exposure can be triggers. Avoid hot baths, saunas and other environments that raise your body temperature.

**Intense exercise:** High-intensity workouts overheat the body, which can trigger flushing and worsen facial redness. Avoid vigorous exercise or divide it into shorter sessions.

**Stress:** Stress is one of the most common triggers associated with rosacea flare-ups. If this is a trigger for you, seek out ways to manage emotional upset — such as getting enough sleep, deep breathing and stretching, exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet.

**Medications:** Prolonged use of prescription-strength cortisone creams on the face can precipitate rosacea flares (steroid rosacea) and worsen rosacea symptoms. Topical acne treatments may also increase dryness and irritation, exacerbating rosacea. Certain blood pressure medications that cause blood vessels to dilate and flushing can also prompt flare-ups.

**Cosmetic products:** Products with fragrance, alcohol, abrasives, or other irritating ingredients can aggravate rosacea symptoms. Remember that rosacea-prone skin is sensitive and dry, so choose only gentle products.

## TREATMENT

Rosacea does not resolve on its own and untreated rosacea can worsen over time. Unlike acne, self-treating with over-the-counter acne products may irritate skin more — causing more redness and bumps. Your family doctor or dermatologist can prescribe various treatments and recommend appropriate skin care products and cosmetics. While there is no cure, it can be managed with appropriate treatment and lifestyle changes.



**Additional information on Rosacea is available online.**

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