COPING WITH rosacea

Lifestyle Management for Rosacea Patients

NATIONAL ROSACEA SOCIETY

rosacea.org
Rosacea (pronounced “roh-ZAY-sha”) is a common but poorly understood disorder of the facial skin that is estimated to affect more than 415 million people worldwide. It is a chronic but treatable condition that primarily affects the central face – usually the cheeks, nose, chin or forehead – and is often characterized by flare-ups and remissions.

Patient surveys indicate rosacea often begins as a facial redness that may come and go, and might be mistaken for extended blushing or sunburn that doesn’t go away. Over time the redness becomes more persistent, and tiny visible blood vessels may appear. Without treatment, bumps and pimples are common and in advanced cases, the skin may thicken from excess tissue, especially around the nose. In about half of patients, the eyes may also become irritated and appear watery or bloodshot.

Although rosacea cannot be cured, its symptoms can be controlled and its progression arrested through long-term medical treatment and lifestyle modifications. This booklet from the National Rosacea Society (NRS) is designed to help you moderate or eliminate those lifestyle and environmental factors that may aggravate your individual condition.
How Is Rosacea Diagnosed and Treated?

Rosacea is typically diagnosed through the identification of individual signs and symptoms, called phenotypes, that may develop during the disease process.

A diagnosis of rosacea may be considered in the presence of at least one diagnostic sign – either persistent redness of the central facial skin or, less commonly, thickened skin in the central face (known as phymatous changes, often on the nose). Two or more major signs may also indicate rosacea, including bumps and pimples, flushing, visible blood vessels, and eye irritation. Secondary signs and symptoms, such as burning or stinging, swelling, and dry appearance, may also develop but are not diagnostic. Physicians must rule out other possible causes of rosacea-like symptoms – such as lupus, steroid-induced rosacea or seborrheic dermatitis – before confirming the diagnosis.

While rosacea cannot be cured, its symptoms can be controlled through medical treatment and lifestyle modifications. The first step is to visit a dermatologist who can provide a professional diagnosis and work with you to develop a treatment plan specific to your symptoms. Because the underlying disorder is chronic and cannot be cured, it’s important to consistently use medications as they are prescribed even after the reduction or remission of symptoms is achieved.

Surveys indicate women are more likely to experience signs and symptoms on the cheeks and chin, while men are more likely to have redness and swelling of the nose.
Identifying Your Individual Rosacea Triggers

Rosacea “triggers” are the factors that cause a flare-up of signs and symptoms, such as redness or bumps and pimples. There are a wide variety of potential factors that may trigger a rosacea flare-up in various individuals, ranging from certain weather conditions to particular foods. As rosacea and its symptoms often vary for each patient, keeping a diary is a systematic way to determine which triggers affect your individual case. Track diet, weather, emotions, and activities like exercising, socializing, work-related tasks and household chores. Write down when you experience rosacea symptoms, as well as their intensity and duration.

To help determine your personal rosacea triggers, the NRS offers a “Rosacea Diary” booklet that provides an easy format for identifying which environmental, dietary and other factors may affect you. Obtain a copy online at rosacea.org, or by writing or calling the Society.

An NRS survey of rosacea patients identified the most common triggers. While the range of potential triggers on this list may seem overwhelming, remember that every patient isn’t affected by each trigger, and there is no need to avoid triggers that don’t affect your individual condition.

There are a wide variety of potential factors that may trigger a rosacea flare-up in various individuals.
While the list of potential rosacea triggers in various individuals may be endless, a survey of 1,066 rosacea patients found that the most common factors included the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCENT AFFECTED</th>
<th>ROSACEA TRIGGER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81%</td>
<td>Sun exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79%</td>
<td>Emotional stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Hot weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>Wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56%</td>
<td>Heavy exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Alcohol consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Hot baths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>Cold weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45%</td>
<td>Spicy foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44%</td>
<td>Humidity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td>Indoor heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41%</td>
<td>Certain skin-care products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Heated beverages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Certain cosmetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Medications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Medical conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Certain fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Marinated meats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Certain vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Dairy products</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coping with Common Rosacea Triggers

SUN EXPOSURE
Sun exposure is known to be the most common trigger for rosacea. It’s very important to protect your skin as much as possible. Here are a few tips:

- Stick to the shade.
- Wear a hat.
- Wear sunglasses.
- Avoid peak sunlight hours.
- Apply sunscreen regularly.

Choosing a good sunscreen is important. There are two types of damaging solar rays: UVA rays age skin; UVB rays burn it. Surprisingly, not all sunscreens protect against both. Look for non-chemical sunscreens that contain zinc or titanium dioxide and deliver UVA/UVB protection with an SPF of 30 or higher. A formula designed for sensitive skin, such as a convenient mineral formulation, can help reduce the possibility of irritation. Also avoid direct sunlight by wearing a wide-brimmed hat to shade your face.

STRESS
Emotional stress ranks high on the list of triggers for many rosacea sufferers. Fortunately, in an NRS survey of more than 700 rosacea patients, 67 percent found that they were able to reduce the number of flare-ups they experienced through stress management techniques. Here are a few methods for dealing with stress in your day-to-day life:

- Practice yoga.
- Try meditation.
- Develop a fitness routine.
- Maintain a healthful and nutritious diet.
- Sleep more.

Improving communication in relationships, reducing financial burdens and easing workplace pressure are additional steps you can take to reduce stress.

WEATHER
Hot weather, humidity, harsh wind and cold are some of the top triggers for many rosacea patients.
If weather conditions affect your rosacea, consider using the following strategies to avoid a flare-up:

**Apply sunscreen daily, year-round**, regardless of whether it’s sunny or cloudy, as the incidental exposure you get walking to your car or running errands can be just as damaging to skin over time as a day at the beach.

**Stay in a cool, air-conditioned environment on hot, humid days.** If this is impossible, those affected should sip cold drinks and try not to over-exert themselves. If necessary, chew on ice chips to lower facial temperature, or spray your face with cool water.

**Combat cold by covering your cheeks and nose with a scarf.** In winter, rosacea sufferers also may don a ski mask when participating in outdoor sports or activities, as well as cover up on windy days. If these conditions aggravate your rosacea, limiting your time outdoors in cold weather may also help.

**Use a moisturizer daily.** According to many dermatologists, moisturizer is a key for preventing the burning, stinging, itching and irritation often associated with rosacea, as well as building a strong moisture barrier to help keep out impurities and irritants that may aggravate sensitive skin.

**FOODS & BEVERAGES**

Steaming hot soup or coffee, spicy nachos, a glass of wine – no matter how appetizing they sound, these foods and beverages may be a problem for some rosacea sufferers. Hot liquids may cause flushing. Spicy foods like hot sauce or salsa can raise a sweat, and alcoholic beverages may trigger flare-ups in many cases. These tips will help you select rosacea-friendly meals:

**Monitor how your rosacea reacts to alcoholic beverages.** Alcoholic beverages – especially red wine – often induce flare-ups in rosacea sufferers. If alcohol aggravates your condition, reduce your intake or avoid alcohol entirely.
Avoid “hot” spices such as white and black pepper, cinnamon, paprika, red pepper and cayenne, which are common rosacea tripwires.

Reduce the heat in beverages. Decreasing the temperature may be all that’s necessary to keep enjoying coffee, tea and hot chocolate, for example. Or try reducing the number of cups you drink from three or four to one or two instead.

Identify and avoid any foods that aggravate your individual condition. Some rosacea sufferers have reported a wide variety of foods that trigger flare-ups in their individual cases. Examples have included tomatoes, cheese and other dairy products, citrus fruit, chocolate, soy sauce, yeast extract (though bread is OK), vinegar, eggplant, liver, spinach, broad-leafed beans and pods, and foods high in histamine or niacin. While you may be sensitive to one or more of these foods or something else, it isn’t necessary to avoid them unless they cause a flare-up for you. Keeping a diary of what you have consumed and when your condition flares can help identify and avoid what may be an issue for you.

EXERCISE
In an NRS survey, 56 percent of rosacea patients said heavy exercise exacerbated their skin condition. Unlike other rosacea triggers that might be easier to forgo, physical activity is essential to leading a healthy lifestyle. Incorporating exercise
into a weekly routine can help maintain good health while allowing a chance to let off steam and socialize. If you want to work out without causing a flare-up, the key is to find an activity that is low intensity and won’t cause you to overheat. Walking, swimming, yoga and Pilates are some options to consider. Even then, take these precautions:

**Incorporate breaks into your exercise routine**, or try exercising for shorter, more frequent intervals. For instance, exercise for 15-20 minutes three times a day, rather than all at once.

**Try to stay as cool as possible.** Drape a cool, damp towel around your neck, drink cold fluids, and keep a bottle filled with cool water to spray on your face.

**Run a fan or air-conditioning** or keep a window open for a breeze while working out indoors to avoid overheating.

**Choose early morning or evening hours** when it’s cooler for outdoor exercise. Don’t forget to protect your face from the sun.

**BATHING & CLEANSING**
Rosacea sufferers often must modify their approach to facial cleansing and bathing. The following tips can help you adopt a personal-care routine that soothes and calms your facial redness:

**Avoid hot water, hot tubs and saunas.** These can bring on flushing and aggravate your condition.
Begin or end each day with a gentle facial cleansing. Gently cleanse your face to remove any makeup or dirt accumulated throughout the day. Use a mild cleanser that is not grainy or abrasive and spread it with your fingertips. Rinse your face with lukewarm water to remove all dirt and soap, and use a thick cotton towel to gently blot the face dry.

Never pull, tug, scratch or treat your face harshly. Avoid any rough washcloths, loofahs, brushes or sponges.

Let your face thoroughly air dry before applying any medication or skin-care products. Let your face rest for a few minutes before applying topical medication. Then allow the medication to dry completely for five to 10 minutes before applying any moisturizer or makeup.

Men should use an electric shaver rather than a razor. If a blade is preferred, never use a dull blade that requires extra scraping for a clean shave. Avoid shaving lotions or toners that burn or sting.

SKIN CARE PRODUCTS
Consistent, gentle skin care and effective use of cosmetics can make a visible difference in managing rosacea and improving the look of your skin. The key is to use products and techniques that minimize irritation.

Look for products that are noted as appropriate for sensitive skin and avoid any products that sting, burn or cause irritation. In an NRS survey, many patients cited the following ingredients as triggers for irritation: alcohol (66 percent), witch hazel (30 percent), fragrance (30 percent), menthol (21 percent), peppermint (14 percent) and eucalyptus oil (13 percent). Other practices for avoiding flare-ups from skin-care products include:

Choose fragrance-free products whenever possible.

Test new products first. Before using a product on your face, try it on a patch of skin in a peripheral
area, such as the neck. If you have a reaction, avoid the product and note the ingredients.

**Keep it simple.** The more ingredients and products you apply to your skin, the higher the likelihood that an ingredient or product may aggravate it.

**COSMETICS**

While medical therapy can address the underlying physical aspects of rosacea, makeup can help instantly improve the look of your skin and boost your self-confidence about your appearance. Here are some makeup tips to help you look and feel your best:

A green-tinted base can help visually correct redness and even out skin tone. Get one with UVA/UVB protection and you’ll also help shield skin from sun exposure that can aggravate rosacea. A protective base has another bonus, too: it helps your makeup last longer.

**Choose oil-free foundation and concealer.** Look for an oil-free foundation that offers the level of coverage you need, from sheer to full. And for both foundation and concealer, choose your shade carefully. Foundation should match your natural skin tone as closely as possible, while concealer should be just one shade lighter than your natural skin tone.

**Go easy on blush** if you use it at all, since rosacea skin already tends to have a lot of color. Choose sheer blush formulated for sensitive skin and apply sparingly with a clean brush, sweeping it from the apples of the cheeks toward the temples.

**Opt for extra-gentle eye makeup.** Eyes are sensitive to begin with, and if you suffer from ocular rosacea, it’s especially important to treat the skin around your eyes gently. Select products designed for sensitive eyes that have been ophthalmologist tested; hypoallergenic, fragrance-free formulas may be ideal. Mascara and eyeliner should be easy to
apply and remove without pulling or tugging on the eyes.

**MEDICAL CONDITIONS AND DRUGS**

Physicians have found that some underlying health conditions and medications can stimulate a flushing response and trigger rosacea flare-ups. Others may mimic rosacea’s signs and symptoms. The following conditions should be ruled out or treated by your doctor to help bring flare-ups under control:

- **Hot flashes** associated with menopause have brought on rosacea’s first appearance in some women.

- **Seborrheic dermatitis**, a chronic inflammatory skin disorder, is the most common skin condition to occur at the same time as rosacea. It can look like powdery or greasy scales on the face and other parts of the body and have a burning sensation.

- **Allergies** to seasonal irritants or product ingredients may cause redness, irritation or inflammation.

- **Systemic diseases**, such as high blood pressure, have been identified as causes of rosacea flare-ups. When flushing is accompanied by itching, breathing difficulties or diarrhea, seek medical attention.

- **Fever, coughs and colds**, although intermittent, may provoke the flushing that begins a rosacea flare-up.

- **Vasodilator drugs** are used to treat cardiovascular disease because of their ability to dilate the blood vessels, which may result in redness or flushing in some patients.

- **Long-term use of topical steroids** has been found to aggravate rosacea or induce rosacea-like symptoms. The good news is that effective treatment of rosacea-like symptoms due to topical corticosteroids is usually very simple: stop using the medication.
Comorbidities

Comorbidity is the occurrence of two disorders or illnesses in the same person, at the same time or one after another, and does not necessarily mean that one causes the other. Recent research has found that rosacea patients have a higher incidence of a growing number of potentially serious conditions.

Gastrointestinal disorders that occur more often in patients with rosacea include celiac disease, Crohn’s disease, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis and gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Associated cardiovascular disorders include high cholesterol levels, coronary artery disease and high blood pressure. Other conditions include thyroid cancer, basal cell carcinoma and brain cancer; allergies, respiratory diseases, diabetes, urogenital diseases and female hormone imbalance; Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s disease.

While rosacea patients’ overall risk for these diseases is still very low, it’s reasonable for people who are diagnosed with rosacea to seek a general health examination if appropriate.

Managing Psychological and Social Aspects of Rosacea

Even though you may find your self-confidence and self-esteem are suffering as a result of your appearance, you can turn the situation around by taking appropriate action to bring your rosacea symptoms under control.

The first step is to accept that you have a medical condition, rather than denying it. Although rosacea is not life threatening, it is a chronic disorder with flare-ups and remissions. Although this fact cannot be changed, you can personally take control of your condition and restore your appearance by complying with long-term medical therapy and avoiding those lifestyle factors that aggravate your individual case.
In NRS surveys, 90 percent of rosacea patients said rosacea’s effect on personal appearance had lowered their self-esteem and self-confidence, and 52 percent said they had avoided face-to-face contact because of the disorder. Among those with severe symptoms, 51 percent said they had even missed work because of their condition.

The good news is that emotional health is generally restored when rosacea symptoms are successfully addressed. Seventy percent of rosacea sufferers responding to an NRS survey said their emotional well-being improved when their rosacea was effectively treated, and most also reported improvement in their professional interactions and social lives.

It also may help you to know that you are not alone. It’s estimated that more than 16 million Americans suffer from rosacea, although many may not be fortunate enough to realize it and seek treatment.

If you find yourself the subject of stares or comments during a flare-up, try turning this awkward situation into a positive educational opportunity by openly discussing your condition. Recognize that most people are unaware of rosacea, so take into account that most reactions are simply caused by curiosity and ignorance, rather than any negative intent.

Through medical therapy, lifestyle changes and trigger avoidance, you can minimize rosacea’s impact on your life.
Take the initiative to explain the condition to people you see regularly – especially your employer and co-workers, who may have real concerns about whether the condition will affect your job performance or their own health. Put to rest the common misconceptions that rosacea’s symptoms are caused by poor hygiene or excessive drinking, or that the disorder may be contagious. Pass along educational materials on rosacea if appropriate.

Through this approach, you can transform potentially negative situations into constructive opportunities to create understanding and even help others who may unknowingly suffer from this condition.

It’s important to take care of your mental health after being diagnosed with rosacea. This might mean sharing that you have the condition with family, friends and co-workers, and working to raise awareness. Join the rosacea community by becoming a member of the NRS or an online support group, and help fight the feelings of isolation so common among rosacea patients.
This booklet is made possible by an educational grant from Cutanea Life Sciences, a specialty pharmaceutical company whose mission is to develop and supply innovative technologies to treat disorders of the skin and subcutaneous tissue, including rosacea. As part of its commitment to improving the lives of those who suffer from this widespread disorder, Cutanea supports the National Rosacea Society’s efforts to raise awareness and provide education on rosacea. Learn more about the company at cutanea.com.
Join the National Rosacea Society!

The **National Rosacea Society** (NRS) is the world’s largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of the untold millions who suffer from this widespread but poorly understood disorder. Through education and advocacy, our mission is threefold:

- To raise awareness of rosacea
- To provide public health information on the disorder
- To encourage and support medical research that may lead to improvements in its management, prevention and potential cure.

**Why Should I Join?**

Annually contributing members are the lifeblood of our efforts to expand important medical research on this often life-disruptive condition. Individual donations are used to support the NRS research grants program unless designated otherwise, and with each donation this program grows stronger and more significant. When you join the NRS, you help the millions around the world affected by rosacea – as well as yourself.

**What Do I Get If I Join?**

As a new member, you will receive a New Member Support Kit that includes a booklet on rosacea and materials to help you identify and avoid your rosacea triggers. You will also receive your first issue of a one-year subscription to *Rosacea Review*, an NRS newsletter with new information on rosacea, features and case histories on its effective care, and reports on rosacea research. In addition, you will have access to mailings of new educational materials, free product samples, discounts and opportunities to participate in research.

**How Do I Join?**

Joining is easy. Just fill out the form below, or visit [https://www.rosacea.org/join](https://www.rosacea.org/join). Membership is a donation of any amount and is tax-deductible in the U.S. A minimum donation in the amount of $25 is suggested.

---

**Name:**  

**Address:**  

**City:**  

**State:**  

**Zip Code:**  

**Email:**  

**Phone:**

Mail this form to: National Rosacea Society, 196 James Street, Barrington, IL 60010.

The National Rosacea Society is a nonprofit organization that is tax exempt pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Individual contributors may designate the use of their donations for program services other than grants for medical research studies by noting so on their check.