

February/March 2000

A Rose is a Rose is a Rose, So What is Rosacea?

Funny that you asked, since March is "Rosacea Awareness Month. And with good reason, apparently. A recent survey conducted by [The Gallup Organization](#) found that 73 percent of Americans have never even heard of the disease, according to Barbara Palumbo, who is with the [National Rosacea Society](#), Barrington, Ill. That despite the fact that 13 million of us, at last count, suffer from it.

So what is it? Well, rosacea (pronounced *ro-zay-sheah*) is a disease that affects the skin of the face. It shows itself, at first, typically as persistent blush on the cheeks, but can worsen to include other symptoms and other parts of the face. The onset is often gradual, and so many people chalk it up to a change in their complexion. But, rosacea is treatable - it can't be cured yet, but it can be controlled.

Symptomatically speaking

Rarely diagnosed under the age of 30, according to the NRS, rosacea sufferers typically exhibit at least one of the most commons symptoms:

- Redness -- like a blush, but gradually more conspicuous and persistent.
- Pimples - similar to teenage acne, which account for its commonly being referred to as "acne rosacea."
- Red lines - actually enlarged blood vessels that may be hidden at first by redness but appear when the color subsides.
- Bumps on the nose - occasionally, if left untreated, knobby bumps will appear on the nose (of men typically) even to the point at which the nose looks swollen.

Why me? Why now?

Often-asked questions. All the more so because most people think they've left behind their skin problems in their teenage years. Rosacea strikes adults, however, and like acne, you can act to mitigate its influence.

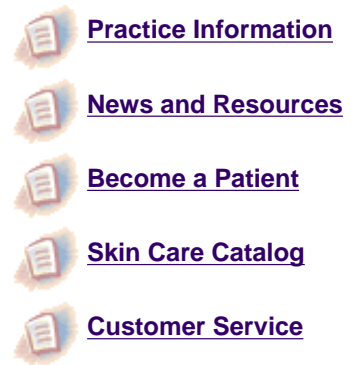
Though researchers aren't sure what causes rosacea (they do report a strong link between those who flush or blush often, and those who are most susceptible to the disease), research is ongoing. In the mean time, your dermatologist can prescribe several medications that can control the redness and reduce the number of blemishes.

For your own part, doctors say cleaning your face and keeping it moisturized are important when you have rosacea. But, you should be careful about the products you use. In general, use mild soaps that do not contain alcohol or irritants, use moisturizers as needed, and sunscreens with an SPF of 15 or higher.

Flushing appears to complicate symptoms, and so you will want to work with your dermatologist on avoiding foods and situations that make you flush. Everyone is different in this respect, but common flush stimulators are hot drinks, alcohol, spicy foods, stress, sunlight, and extreme heat or cold.

If you would like to find out more about the disease, the [National Rosacea Society](#) has set up a toll-free hotline on which you can ask specific questions. It also gains you access to the organization's physician-referral network. The number is (888) NO-BLUSH. You can also read more about rosacea in the NRS's quarterly newsletter, [Rosacea Review](#).

You might also want to take the [on-line "Is It Rosacea" quiz](#), sponsored by drug maker [Galderma](#).



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