Rosacea

What is rosacea?

Rosacea is an ongoing skin disease that can cause your face to flush (get red). You may also have what looks like acne on your nose, cheeks, chin or forehead. Sometimes rosacea affects the eyes. This is called **ocular rosacea**, and its symptoms can include:

- red, burning or watering eyes
- the feeling like something is stuck in your eye
- redness and swelling on your eyelids and at the base of eyelashes

Some people have rosacea affecting their skin but no symptoms of ocular rosacea. Others have ocular rosacea but no skin symptoms. You can also have both forms of rosacea. Women are more likely than men to have rosacea.

People with ocular rosacea may have red or bloodshot eyes.

What causes rosacea?

Doctors do not know for sure why people get rosacea. It may be genetic (passed down in families). Or it could be caused by something in the environment.

Some researchers think rosacea is caused by a condition that swells blood vessels. This leads to redness and flushing. Others think tiny organisms or mites clog oil glands on the face. That makes the skin swollen and red.

Some research has also shown a possible link between rosacea and the **Helicobacter pylori** bacteria. This is the same bacteria that causes gastrointestinal infections.

Causes for rosacea flare-ups

Studies show that certain foods and activities can cause rosacea to flare up. Rosacea triggers you might try to avoid include:

- being outside in the heat, sun, wind, or cold
- doing very active sports, such as running
- drinking alcohol
- eating spicy foods
- drinking hot coffee or tea
- feeling stressed or upset

How is rosacea treated?

While there is no cure for rosacea, ophthalmologists can help control and treat its symptoms.

Here are some treatments for eye symptoms:

- Steroid eye drops and ointments to reduce redness and swelling
- Antibiotic pills or ointments to treat eye infection and rosacea of the skin
- Artificial tears to help keep eyes moist. (DO NOT take eye drops that treat bloodshot eyes. These can make ocular rosacea symptoms worse.)
- Eyelid scrubs to keep your eyes clean and free of infection. Here is what to do: Gently clean your eyelids with a washcloth. To do this, use a special eyelid cleaning product or baby shampoo mixed with warm water. Also, apply a warm cloth or pad to your closed eyes as often as your doctor recommends.

Summary

Rosacea is an ongoing (chronic) skin disease that causes your face to flush red. If your eyes are affected, they can be red and watery, and feel irritated and painful.

Treating the eye symptoms of rosacea may include using steroid eye drops and ointments to reduce redness and swelling. Antibiotics might be used if there is an eye infection. Eyelid scrubs are recommended to keep your eyes clean and free of infection.

Get more information about eye health from EyeSmart—provided by the American Academy of Ophthalmology—at **aao.org/eyesmart**.

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