

Rosacea is a chronic condition that affects more than 16 million Americans. Its classic symptoms are patchy flushing (redness) and inflammation, particularly on the cheeks, nose and chin. It typically appears between the ages of 30 and 50 and affects more women than men.

### **Types of Rosacea**

Most experts consider there to be 4 types of rosacea:

Pre-Rosacea may appear as early as the teen years as a repeated tendency to blush or flush.

**Subtype I (Erythematotelangiectatic "Vascular" Rosacea)** is characterized by flushing and persistent redness, or erythema, of the central face. Commonly, blood vessels dilate and appear as small red lines known as telangiectasias, usually on the nose, cheeks, chin, and possibly the forehead.

**Subtype II (Papulopustular Rosacea)** includes persistent redness of the central face, but has the addition of transient small firm red bumps and pus-filled pimples, also of the central face. Although this looks like acne, the two conditions are very different.

**Subtype III (Phymatous Rosacea)** includes thickened skin, irregular surface nodularities, and enlargement, usually of the nose, when it is called *rhinophyma*.

**Subtype IV (Ocular Rosacea)** is characterized by eyes that can be irritated in any number of ways including burning, itching, dryness, sties, conjunctivitis, blurry vision, crusty or inflamed eyelids, loss of eyelashes, and often light sensitivity.

### **Triggers**

Although the exact cause of rosacea remains a mystery, a number of factors can aggravate it or make it worse by causing flushing and increasing blood flow to the surface of your skin. Some of these include:

- **Sun exposure**
- **Emotional stress, anxiety, anger or embarrassment**
- **Hot weather**
- Wind
- Heavy exercise and "lift and load" jobs
- Alcohol
- Hot baths, saunas
- Cold weather
- Spicy foods
- Humidity
- Skin and hair care products containing alcohol, witch hazel, or fragrances, or any causing redness or stinging
- Indoor heat
- Heated beverages
- Certain cosmetics
- Medical conditions
- Drugs that dilate blood vessels, such as some blood pressure medications
- Certain fruits such as citrus fruits, tomatoes, bananas, red plums, raisins, and figs
- Marinated meats
- Certain vegetables such as eggplant, avocados, spinach, lima beans, navy beans, and peas
- Dairy products

### **Self-care**

In addition to getting treatment from your doctor, you can play an active part in your treatment. Rosacea is an inflammatory condition, so we recommend eating an Anti-inflammatory Diet. Minimize your exposure to anything that causes a flare-up. Because everyone is different, find out what triggers (listed above) affect you so that you can avoid them.

Here are general suggestions for preventing flare-ups:

- **Wear a broad spectrum (both UV-A and UV-B protection) medical grade sunscreen every day for the rest of your life.** We recommend a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 25 daily and at least 40 if you will be out in the sun. We carry several of the best medical grade sunscreens available including one specifically for rosacea, and can help you choose the products that will be best for you.
- **Stay in air conditioning during hot weather; never exercise during the heat of the day, wear wicking clothing while exercising and hydrate well**
- **Practice relaxation techniques to help minimize the blushing and flushing that occur when you are nervous or stressed.**
- **Avoid drinking alcohol, especially types that cause flushing**
- Avoid facial products that contain alcohol or other skin irritants, and use products that are non-comedogenic, especially if you have pustular rosacea. We carry an excellent line of products from Avène specifically designed for patients with sensitive rosacea skin.
- Protect your face in the winter with a soft scarf or ski mask.
- Avoid irritating your facial skin by rubbing or touching it too much.
- When using moisturizer and a topical medication, apply the moisturizer after the medication has dried.
- If you have a flare, consider using green- or yellow-tinted pre-foundation creams and powders because they're designed to counter skin redness. We carry an excellent product of this type made by Avène.

## Treatment

There are several equally important components of a successful treatment plan for rosacea.

1. **Regular facials (e.g. every 2 months) provided by someone who truly understands rosacea** benefits Subtype I and Subtype II. Our aesthetician is very experienced with the management of rosacea.
2. **Enerpeel® Mandelic Acid Peels** (offered at our office) are specifically designed for rosacea and benefit Subtypes I and II.
3. Prescription medications
  - a. Topical retinoid (**Rétrinal**): Retinoids are most effective for Subtype II. Unlike common retinoids such as Retin-A, Tazorac, or Differin, which cause irritation, redness, and peeling and are inappropriate for sensitive rosacea skin, Rétrinal is more gentle and better tolerated. Rétrinal is available in our office.
  - b. **MetroGel**: This topical antibiotic gel fights bacteria and decreases inflammation in Subtype II.
  - c. **Finacea Topical Gel**: Azelaic acid is a naturally occurring acid that helps the skin renew itself more quickly, therefore reducing pustule formation. It also helps kill the bacteria that cause Subtype II.
  - d. **Oracea, Doxycycline** (Oral antibiotics): These fight bacteria and decrease inflammation in Subtype II. Oracea and Doxycycline cannot be used in pregnancy and are therefore contraindicated in fertile women attempting pregnancy or not using birth control. Oracea can also worsen gastric reflux and must be taken on an empty stomach
  - e. **Inderal** (Beta Blocker): This stabilizes blood vessels and can forestall blushing/flushing in patients for whom this is a significant or disabling feature of their rosacea.
4. Laser and Light-based treatments
  - a. **Laser Genesis** is a gentle heating of the superficial dermis which helps shrink the enlarged pores associated with rosacea. Laser Genesis should be performed every 2-4 weeks for a series of at least 5, and then followed up with single maintenance treatments as needed.
  - b. **Limelight® Laser and IPL** treat the diffuse redness characteristic of rosacea. The treatment feels like intermittent rubber band snaps. Most patients need 3 treatments. Patients look and feel like they have had sunburn for up to 2 hours after these treatments. It is very important to moisturize well and often throughout the treatment period with a moisturizer specifically for rosacea skin.
  - c. **Laser Vascular Treatment** treats the distinct visible vessels that often appear on the cheeks, chin, and around the nose of patients with rosacea.
    - i. Patients with rosacea, by virtue of the exaggerated reactivity of their skin, will often have slight swelling and blotchiness after laser vascular treatment. Therefore, these appointments should be scheduled accordingly.
    - ii. As rosacea is a chronic condition, not a disease which can be cured, patients will continue to get small visible vessels throughout their lives, especially if they are not adequately careful to avoid their particular triggers. Therefore, on-going maintenance treatments will most likely be required.