

As rosacea persists, frequent and intense increases in blood flow may weaken blood vessels—like a rubber band gone lax from being stretched too much—and other changes may cause the condition to progress. Skin could then look more crimson overall. It may also become inflamed, and you might see small, pimple-like bumps. These symptoms tend to worsen with age.

WHAT CAUSES IT The condition, which affects about 15 million Americans, according to the National Rosacea Society, is mostly driven by genetics, says Ranella Hirsch, M.D., a dermatologist in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It's most prevalent in the fair-skinned, but people with darker skin tones can develop it too. In fact, because natural skin pigment can mask some of the early pinkness, those with darker skin tones may not realize they have it until it's gotten worse and the redness is very noticeable.

Multiple factors likely play a role in causing rosacea. "We know that the nerves overfire, which overstimulates blood vessels to dilate," Dr. Zeichner says. People with rosacea also seem to have higher levels of pro-inflammatory peptides called cathelicidins in their skin, which may overreact to certain stimuli and unleash a major and unwarranted inflammatory response.

WHAT TO DO If you suddenly start flushing, see a dermatologist or your doctor to make sure you don't have an underlying blood pressure issue, Dr. Hirsch says. Try keeping a diary of flushing episodes to pinpoint your personal triggers so you can avoid them. And be especially gentle with your skin, Dr. Zeichner says. Stop using scrubs, peels, and other drying, exfoliating, or fragranced products, all of which can make skin like yours even redder.

Also, consider asking your dermatologist about Rhofade. The new Rx cream's active ingredient targets cell pathways responsible for dilating the skin's blood vessels and constricts them for 12 hours, says Arielle Kauvar, M.D., a dermatologist in NYC. It can regulate the flow of blood to skin, almost like installing a low-flow showerhead. Lasers are still the most effective and long-lasting treatment for flushing (three or four sessions can eliminate layers of visible, overactive blood vessels), but Rhofade offers a more immediate alternative. The two have shown promise when used in tandem.

Sensitive skin & skin allergies

WHAT TO WATCH FOR Skin feels tight or raw after you apply products (even mild ones) or in response to environmental factors like extreme weather

GET THE RED OUT

A simple three-step routine for calm, healthy skin, whether you've got rosacea, sensitivity, or allergies.

1/Micellar cleanser

These formulas suspend tiny cleansing drops in water that grab dirt and makeup. They're the gentlest way to cleanse and won't disrupt skin's moisture or the protective barrier between cells, Dr. Zeichner says. Try **Avène Micellar Lotion** (\$18, aveneusa.com).

2/Barrier-repairing moisturizer

Slather on lotions or creams with ceramides—lipid molecules found naturally in skin that make up part of the protection substance essential for a strong barrier—and niacinamide, a form of vitamin B₃ that helps your body produce its own natural ceramides. "These ingredients can help make up for what's lacking in skin," Dr. Hirsch says. Bonus: Niacinamide has anti-inflammatory properties. Try **La Roche-Posay Toleriane Double Repair Moisturizer** (\$20, drugstores), which contains both.

3/Sunscreen

People with sensitive skin and rosacea may be especially susceptible to UV damage. A survey from the National Rosacea Society found that 81 percent of respondents said the sun triggered a rosacea flare. Chemical sunscreen ingredients are effective, but if they make your skin sting, look for those with titanium or zinc oxide. Try **EltaMD UV Clear Broad-Spectrum SPF 46**, which has zinc oxide and niacinamide (\$33, eltamd.com).

and wind. Fair skin will look red and irritated, while darker skin tones may develop dark spots and pigmentation over time. Both skin types may become flaky and dry and may have redness, Dr. Russak says, with all symptoms potentially worsening midway through your menstrual cycle, when progesterone surges.

WHAT CAUSES IT While aspects of your skin-care routine may be to blame (a hypersensitivity to a specific ingredient, for example), some people have a weaker skin barrier and their skin is naturally more reactive, Dr. Russak says. The term *skin barrier* refers to skin cells and a fatty substance between them that acts as a mortar to cells' bricks. It's the gatekeeper that holds water in and keeps irritants out. When it's weak, water escapes and molecules in the environment or in products can penetrate more deeply. Your body senses an attack and launches an immune response, which triggers irritation, inflammation, and the increased blood flow you see as redness.

WHAT TO DO Abandon your products—especially those with fragrance (one of the most common skin allergens)—and switch to cleansers and moisturizers with ingredients known to shore up the skin barrier, such as ceramides, and soothing and cooling aloe vera gel.

And try to keep stress in check: A review in the journal *Inflammation & Allergy—Drug Targets* found stress can affect barrier function, making skin drier and potentially more sensitive. ★

