Rosacea, Frequently asked Questions (FAQ's)

Rosacea is a long-term (*chronic*) disease that affects the skin and sometimes the eyes. Symptoms include redness and pimples. In advanced stages, patients may get thickened skin. Rosacea usually affects the face. Other parts of the upper body are rarely involved. Over time, the redness becomes ruddier and lasts longer. It usually begins after age 30 and is marked by periods of flaring up and then getting better. If left untreated, over time, a condition called rhinophyma may develop. This is a condition on the nose of bumps and pimples. In severe cases the nose may become swollen and bumpy from excess tissue. Sometimes the eyes are affected with the skin problems. However, it is possible to have eye involvement alone without the skin changes. The eyes feel irritated and appear watery or bloodshot.

There is no cure for rosacea and the cause is unknown. Treatment is available to control or reverse its signs and symptoms. Individuals who suspect they may have rosacea are urged to see a doctor specializing in skin problems (*dermatologist*) or other knowledgeable physician for diagnosis and the right treatment.

WHO GETS ROSACEA?

Rosacea can affect anyone. Individuals with fair skin who tend to flush or blush easily are more often affected. Rosacea can develop in people of any skin color. It tends to occur most commonly and is most apparent in people with fair skin with light hair and eye color. It most often affects adults between the ages of 30 and 60. It is more common in women, particularly during menopause, than men.

WHAT DOES ROSACEA LOOK LIKE?

There are several symptoms and conditions associated with rosacea. They include:

- Frequent flushing or redness of the center of the face. This may appear on the forehead, nose, cheeks, and chin. Frequent flushing occurs in the **earliest stage of rosacea**. The flushing often is accompanied by a burning sensation, particularly when creams or cosmetics are applied to the face. Sometimes the face is swollen slightly.
- A condition called **vascular rosacea** causes persistent flushing and redness. Blood vessels under the skin of the face may get bigger. These blood vessels show through the skin as small red lines. This is called telangiectasia. The affected skin may be swollen slightly and feel warm.
- A condition called **inflammatory rosacea** causes persistent redness and pink bumps (*papules*) and bumps containing pus (*pustules*) on the skin. Eye inflammation and sensitivity as well as telangiectasia also may occur. This stage of rosacea may look like acne, but with rosacea there is an absence of whiteheads/blackheads (*comedones*).
- In the **most advanced stage of rosacea**, the skin becomes a deep shade of red and inflammation of the eye is more obvious. Numerous red blotches on the skin (*telangiectases*) are often present. Nodules in the skin may become painful. A condition called rhinophyma also may develop in some men. It is rare in women. Rhinophyma includes an enlarged, bulbous, and red nose. It is the result of an enlarged oil-producing (*sebaceous*) glands. These glands are beneath the surface of the skin on the nose. People who have rosacea may develop a thickening of the skin on the forehead, chin, cheeks, or other areas.

HOW IS THE EYE AFFECTED?

Up to 50 percent of people who have rosacea have eye problems caused by the condition. Typical eye symptoms include:

- Redness.
- Dryness.
- Itching.
- Burning.
- Tearing.
- Sensation of having sand in the eye.
- Eyelids may become inflamed and swollen.

- Sensitivity to light
- Blurred vision.
- Reduced seeing ability.

WHAT CAUSES ROSACEA?

Doctors do not know the exact cause of rosacea. It is thought some people may inherit a tendency to develop the disorder. Some researchers believe that rosacea is a disorder where blood vessels dilate too easily, resulting in flushing and redness.

Factors that cause rosacea to flare up in one person may have no effect on another person. Although the following factors have not been well-researched, some people claim that one or more of them have aggravated their rosacea:

- Heat (including hot baths).
- Strenuous exercise.
- Sunlight.
- Wind.
- Very cold temperatures.
- Hot or spicy foods and drinks.
- Alcohol consumption.
- Menopause.
- Emotional stress.
- Long-term use of topical steroids on the face.

Patients affected by pustules may assume they are caused by bacteria. Researchers have not established a link between rosacea and bacteria or other organisms on the skin, in the hair follicles, or elsewhere in the body.

CAN ROSACEA BE CURED?

- The goals of treatment are to control the condition and improve the appearance of the patient's skin. It may take several weeks or months of treatment before a person notices an improvement of the skin.
- Some doctors will prescribe a topical antibiotic such as Metronidazole. This is applied directly to the affected skin. For people with more severe cases, doctors often prescribe an oral (taken by mouth) antibiotic. The papules and pustules common in rosacea may get better quickly with treatment. Redness and flushing are less likely to improve.
- Some people who have rosacea become depressed by the changes in the appearance of their skin. A doctor should be consulted if a person feels unusually sad or has other symptoms of depression, such as loss of appetite or trouble concentrating. The National Rosacea Society shows that people who have rosacea often experience:
  - Low self-esteem.
  - Embarrassment because of their appearance.
  - Claim their social and professional interactions suffer.
- Caregivers usually treat the eye problems of rosacea with oral antibiotics. People who develop infections of the eyelids must practice frequent eyelid hygiene. The caregiver may also recommend:
  - Scrubbing the eyelids gently with diluted baby shampoo or an over-the-counter eyelid cleaner.
  - Applying warm, but not hot, compresses several times a day.
- Electrosurgery and laser surgery are treatment options if red lines caused by dilated blood vessels appear in the skin (*telangectases*). These treatments may also be used if rhinophyma develops. For some patients, laser surgery may improve the skin's appearance with little scarring or damage. For patients with rhinophyma, surgical removal of the excess tissue to reduce the size of the nose usually will improve appearance.

WORKING WITH YOUR CAREGIVER TO MANAGE ROSACEA

The role you play in managing your rosacea is important. You can take several steps to keep rosacea under

control:

- Keep a written record of when flare-ups occur. This may provide clues about what is irritating the skin.
- Use mild facial cleansers.
- Most people should use a sunscreen every day that protects against UVA and UVB rays (ultraviolet rays). Sunscreen should have a sun-protecting factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Sunscreen is particularly important for people whose skin is irritated by exposure to the sun. Sunscreens with physical blockers, like zinc oxide or titanium dioxide, may be better tolerated than chemical sunscreens.
- Using a mild moisturizer may be helpful. Avoid applying any irritating products to the face. Some people find that a green-tinted makeup conceals skin redness.
- If your eyes are affected, follow your caregiver's treatment plan. Clean your eyelids as instructed.

TREATMENT

- Signs and symptoms of rosacea vary from patient to patient. Treatment must be made to fit the case.
- Various oral and topical medicine may be prescribed. Dermatologists usually prescribe initial treatment with oral antibiotics and topical therapy to bring the condition under immediate control. It may take 4 to 6 weeks to see results from using the medication. This is followed by long-term use of the topical therapy alone to maintain remission.
- Treatments with lasers, intense pulsed light sources or other medical and surgical devices may be used to:
  - Remove visible blood vessels.
  - Reduce extensive redness.
  - Fix disfigurement of the nose.

Ocular rosacea may be treated with oral antibiotics and other therapy.

- Avoiding lifestyle and environmental factors that trigger rosacea flare-ups.
- The National Rosacea Society offers a free Rosacea Diary Booklet to assist patients in identifying factors that may affect their individual cases. They also offer a booklet called "Coping with Rosacea" that provides tips on lifestyle management.

WHERE CAN PEOPLE GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ROSACEA?

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)
National Institutes of Health
1 AMS Circle
Bethesda, MD 20892-3675
Phone: 301-495-4484 or 877-22-NIAMS (226-4267) (free of charge)
TTY: 301-565-2966
Fax: 301-718-6366
E-mail: NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov
www.niams.nih.gov

American Academy of Dermatology
P.O. Box 4014
Schaumburg, IL 60168-4014
Phone: 847-330-0230 or 888-462-3376 (free of charge)
Fax: 847-330-0050
www.aad.org

National Rosacea Society
800 South Northwest Highway, Suite 200
Barrington, IL 60010
Phone: 888-NO-BLUSH (662-5874) (free of charge)
Fax: 847-382-5567
E-mail: rosaceas@aol.com

www.rosacea.org

The NIAMS gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Mark Dahl, M.D., Mayo Clinic, Scottsdale, AZ; Sam Huff, National Rosacea Society, Barrington, IL; Robert Katz, M.D., Rockville, MD; M. Carol McNeely, M.D., University Dermatology Associates, Washington, DC; Larry Miller, M.D., Chevy Chase, MD; Alan Moshell, M.D., NIAMS, NIH; and Gary Peck, M.D., Washington Hospital Center, Washington, DC, in the review of this fact sheet.

Most of this information is courtesy of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases a division of the National Institute of Health.
NIAMS/National Institutes of Health
1 AMS Circle
Bethesda, MD 20892–3675

Document Released: 12/19/2005 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
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