



ROSACEA

Does your face suddenly turn red after a glass of wine, being in the sun, or eating spicy food? You and one in 20 other New Zealanders could have acne rosacea or rosacea, which is the common term for it.

Rosacea is a red facial rash that commonly affects 30-60 year olds, especially those with fair skin, blue eyes and Celtic origin. When it affects the nose it becomes thick and irregular and is called "a drinker's nose".

Rosacea can affect the eyes and cause blepharitis which is an irritation of the eyelids. Sometimes it can look a bit like acne but there are no blackheads or blocked pores.

We don't officially know the cause but we do know there is inflammation in the skin that causes dilated blood vessels and red lumps. There is a theory about a skin mite called demodex as a cause.

There has also been a controversial association with *Helicobacter pylori*, which is often the cause of stomach ulcers and even stomach cancer. Apparently when this stomach bug is eradicated the rash disappears. This is not thoroughly proven in the scientific literature, however, it is known that low stomach acid and B vitamin deficiency are associated with rosacea. And, as low stomach acid is often associated with overgrowth of *Helicobacter pylori*, this could be the possible association that scientists are currently considering.

This condition can range from mild redness to being extremely disfiguring. This is why it needs to be diagnosed and treated early. If it is allowed to develop into a chronic and severe condition it can cause scar tissue.

The main treatment firstly is to avoid all the triggers:

- Alcohol
- Spicy Foods
- Strong emotion and sunshine - actually, anything that is hot!

Keep a sunblock on the skin. Never put a steroid cream on it because it will get worse. Oily skincare tends to irritate this condition so use sunblocks or makeups that are water based.

Omega 3 fish oils may help a little by reducing inflammation caused by processed foods.

Oral antibiotics can be taken to reduce inflammation. There are also some special medical creams that can be prescribed.

Laser and light treatments can be helpful in reducing the problem.

It is important to get a firm diagnosis and to treat this condition early to prevent it from becoming chronic and causing scarring.

Dr Frances Pitsilis
2A Dodson Avenue, Milford, Auckland
PO Box 31-572, Milford, North Shore City 0741, New Zealand
PHONE: +64 9 486 0030 FAX: +64 9 486 0333
EMAIL: info@drfrances.co.nz WEBSITE: www.drfrances.co.nz

