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Acne or Rosacea?

Find out if your embarrassing blemishes are more than the average zit and what to do about it.

BY COLLEEN MOODY



If you're in your 30s with extra-irritated skin, almost to the point where people constantly think you're blushing, it could be rosacea, not [acne](#), you're dealing with. "One of the most common mistakes people make is using the wrong products on their skin because they don't know which condition they are dealing with," says Dr. Doris Day, a board-certified dermatologist affiliated with Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City who specializes in laser, cosmetic, and surgical dermatology. "Acne treatments can often exacerbate and irritate skin with rosacea, and while the two conditions look very similar, they have different causes and treatments." Take a look at the differences between these two conditions and how you should treat each. (Hint: It takes more than a dab of Clearasil!)

RB: What are the differences between acne and rosacea?

DD: The exact cause of rosacea is unknown, but it tends to appear across the nose, forehead, and cheeks and may look like diffused redness through skin and pimplelike bumps. Rosacea also has triggers that can cause flare-ups, such as extreme temperatures, alcohol, and spicy foods. Most commonly, rosacea first appears in people over 30.

Acne is caused by factors such as bacteria that clog the pores, and can appear at any age. In adults, acne is usually

concentrated on the lower part of the face. Other symptoms include blackheads, or visibly clogged pores, and whiteheads. It's important to go to an expert from the start if you expect you might have rosacea to get correctly diagnosed.

RB: Besides visiting a dermatologist, is there an easy way to distinguish one from the other yourself first?

DD: If you have rosacea, you may notice that your skin flushes or flares up when you are exposed to triggers such as heat, cold, or ingredients like soy or chili. Because rosacea and acne can look similar, even though there are different factors at play, it is best to seek expert help early from a dermatologist, especially since some treatments used for acne can make rosacea worse.

RB: How is the treatment for rosacea different from acne?

DD: Unlike acne, since there is no bacteria involved in rosacea, the treatments are very different. A dermatologist may prescribe topical treatments to calm redness or oral, anti-inflammatory therapies such as [Oracea](#) to help treat the bumps and blemishes of rosacea.

RB: What ingredients should you avoid for both skin issues?

DD: As a general rule of thumb for both acne and rosacea, I would advise choosing products that are fragrance- and dye-free. Pick noncomedogenic products, and keep in mind that even if something is labeled "organic" and "natural," it doesn't mean that it is gentle.

According to the National Rosacea First Impressions Survey, those suffering from rosacea were found to be more stressed in the workplace, insecure, and perceived to be less lucky in love. But how do you cover rosacea up without causing an added flare-up? Collier Strong, makeup expert and beauty consultant for *Project Runway*, gives us some [tips and tricks](#).

RB: Is it okay to wear makeup if you've been diagnosed with rosacea?

CS: As long as your dermatologist clears you, depending on the severity of your condition, you can absolutely wear makeup. I always recommend having an emergency kit of your go-to products with you at all times in case a flare-up occurs.

RB: What are some things that can help cover up rosacea?

CS: Color correctors can make a big difference by helping to neutralize the redness in the skin. They go on sheer and can be used before applying the rest of your makeup. Using a green-based color corrector is best (try [Everyday Minerals Mint Color Corrector](#)), as it will offset the red already on your face, giving you a more neutral color.

RB: Is it safe to use foundation with rosacea?

CS: Yes, as long as you are hygienic when applying it. Apply your foundation with a synthetic brush, not your fingers, to avoid irritating skin with bacteria found on your hands. Make sure to wash the brush after each use for the same reasons. If your condition is less severe, a sponge is okay, but be wary: It might cause irritation since you are dragging it across the skin. Look for a liquid foundation with an olive or yellow base to even out the skin tone. Avoid anything that has an extremely powdery finish, as it will play up the flakiness rosacea often causes on your skin.

RB: What about blush?

CS: You should avoid blush, depending again on the severity of your condition. The upside of rosacea is that you will have a natural blush to your skin, eliminating the need for it in the first place. If you like to wear bronzer, stay away from any that look too orange.

RB: What about your eyes?

CS: If you have rosacea, you should bring attention to your eyes by using more neutral and earth-toned colors to,

again, neutralize redness. Avoid cool tones like gray or blue. Also, make sure to play up your lips so that they complement your eye makeup but bring attention away from the skin. Unless you can completely conceal your rosacea, avoid red lips and instead choose pinks, peaches, nudes, or a coral shade.

To find a dermatologist in your area and learn more about rosacea, visit rosaceafacts.com.

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