

Ask our
experts



skin soothers

We invite our readers to ask a natural therapist their burning questions. **Vera Martins** is our expert for this issue, for the College of Naturopathic Medicine

Q Do you have any suggestions for controlling rosacea without prescription medication?

A Rosacea is an uncomfortable and distressing skin condition in which chronic inflammation and dilation of facial blood vessels causes episodes of flushing and redness, mainly across the cheeks, nose, forehead and chin. Medical treatments include a variety of antibiotics, which may ultimately disturb beneficial bacteria in the gut and exacerbate rosacea symptoms.

Fortunately there are natural things that you can try immediately: keep away from

alcohol (especially red wine), hot drinks, spicy food, and refined sugar. Instead, adopt a nutrient-rich anti-inflammatory diet, containing leafy green vegetables, good sources of omega-3 such as wild salmon and chia seeds, and detoxifying foods such as garlic, ginger, lemon and turmeric. Eat organically wherever possible. Keeping a food and lifestyle diary can be helpful to identify potential triggers. Take a good daily source of probiotics (such as organic kefir, kombucha and sauerkraut) and a high quality anti-inflammatory omega-3 supplement. Learn to manage stress levels, particularly

at meal times, as stress can disturb the gut. Adopt a good skincare routine keeping your skin clean, hydrated, protected from sunlight, and from extreme temperatures. Always avoid skincare products containing steroids and alcohol, and use ones free of synthetic ingredients.

From a naturopathic viewpoint, you need to address the underlying problem to achieve consistent relief. A number of factors have been implicated in the development of rosacea: low stomach hydrochloric acid (HCl), low pancreatic lipase (a digestive enzyme that digests

fat), deficiency in B complex vitamins (particularly vitamin B3), overgrowth of Demodex (a skin mite) and infection with the bacteria *H. pylori*.

If you can, get extra help from a naturopathically trained health practitioner, who would address rosacea from both the inside and outside, through food, supplements, and herbal remedies. Their key priority would be to re-establish a healthy gut function. If a test for *H. pylori* proves positive, herbs such as licorice, ginger, turmeric, green tea and garlic can be taken as food and tinctures, as well as oregano oil, to reduce levels of *H. pylori* and to decrease inflammation.

Herbal extracts of pine bark and bilberry provide extra antioxidants and strengthen blood vessels. Further supplements they may consider would include complex B vitamins and pancreatic lipase.

Topical application of creams containing the naturally occurring azelaic acid (derived from barley, rye and wheat), as well as niacinamide (a form of vitamin B3), can also benefit rosacea skin. A herbalist could prepare a bespoke cream, tailored to your skin's needs, using herbs that research has shown can reduce symptoms of rosacea due to their anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties: chrysanthellum, aloe vera, green tea, licorice, oatmeal and bilberry.

As well as tackling rosacea, these tips can also help you adopt a healthier lifestyle achieving a better body and mind balance.

Please note that my tips apply to adults only, as the condition mainly affects them.

Vera has a PhD in Skin Cancer Biology, and studied Herbal Medicine and Naturopathy at CNM, (College of Naturopathic Medicine). CNM trains students for careers in natural therapies, plus offers Short Courses: naturopathy-uk.com