

how to...

DEAL WITH DIFFICULT SKIN CONDITIONS

If we could paint a canvas of our ideal complexion it would be smooth and clear. Unfortunately, our vision of picture-perfect skin often gets photo-bombed by Mother Nature who instead splatters us with lumps, bumps and redness. But the good news is, conditions such as keratosis pilaris, acne, broken blood vessels, rosacea and acne scars are not only preventable—they can also be reversible.

BY RACHEL NAUD

CONDITION

1

KERATOSIS PILARIS

Goosebumps can be fun—especially when a great performance or a fantastic scene in a movie moves you and your skin and hair raise on your arm in one tingly swoop. But goosebumps that don't go away are not so fun. Otherwise known as chicken skin (how's that for an unattractive moniker?), keratosis pilaris affects approximately 40 per cent of Canadians. It's a dry, rough and sometimes red or slightly brown discolouration that appears around the hair follicles most commonly found on the back of the arms, and less often the outer thighs, buttocks, shoulders, cheeks, and even eyebrows. Genetics are the most commonly identified cause: people with a personal or family history of asthma, hay fever, eczema or dry skin are more prone to it. And the cold, dry climate in Canada can contribute to flareups, too. The good news: many people will slowly outgrow their condition with age. But until that happens, there are a few things you can do.

"Not over-scrubbing the area is important," says Dr. Benjamin Barankin, MD FRCPC, a Toronto dermatologist. "Humidifying your bedroom or home in the winter is helpful, as is having a soft water system installed at home." ►



PHOTOS: THINKSTOCK

For some over-the-counter help, use a glycolic acid product at night such as Reversa Skin Smoothing Body Lotion (\$36, at drugstores.) Also worth trying: Dermaglow Glycolic Body cream (\$34, at Shoppers Drug Mart).



CONDITION 2 **ROSACEA**

It's worse than just blushing: permanently red skin, characterized by an angry, deep-red look, and even broken blood vessels, affects 1.6 million Canadians and frequently begins as a tendency to flush or blush easily. As the condition progresses, people often develop persistent redness in the centre of the face.

"This redness may gradually spread beyond the nose and cheek area to other parts of the face," says Dr. Christine Malcolm, MD, FRCPC, FAAD, DABD, a dermatologist in Grande Prairie, Alta. This condition is sometimes confused with acne because small red bumps can appear, but there are no whiteheads and blackheads do not occur.

In more advanced cases of rosacea, a condition called rhinophyma may develop. This makes the nose appear larger and very bumpy and red. Men are most commonly affected by this, and the most successful treatment is laser.

Unfortunately, we do not know exactly what causes rosacea, but implicated factors include blood flow to the skin, hormones,

environmental exposures and infection. Fair-skinned adults between the ages of 30 and 50 may be at greater risk, although people of all races and ethnic groups can develop rosacea. It's difficult to prevent, but good sun protection, avoiding spicy foods, hot drinks, caffeine and alcohol, as well as protecting your skin against extreme hot and cold temperatures have been shown to slow the condition down.

To soothe a rosacea flareup, try the Aloe Kumari Cleanser from the **Holistic Vanity skin care line** (\$28 found at any of Pure + Simple locations or online at pureandsimple.ca.) which gently cleanses and calms the skin with all-natural ingredients.

Also try **Anti-Redness Complex by Alyria** (\$70 at sesealyria-med.com), which contains Oleanoline IS (an ingredient extracted from olive leaves that detoxifies and clarifies the skin), Regu-Cea and Biophytex, which all work together to soothe inflammation, irritation and reduce the appearance of redness associated with rosacea.

For a more aggressive treatment, Dr. Malcolm recommends a Pulse Dye Laser treatment (such as the VBeam Perfecta). This laser produces a very bright beam of light, which is absorbed by the problem blood vessels and destroys them without damaging the surrounding tissues. Although, patients usually notice significant improvement in the redness and dilated vessels with just one treatment, two or three treatments may be necessary for additional improvement. This procedure typically costs between \$100 and \$400 per treatment at dermatologist's offices.

ERASING ACNE SCARS

Dr. Philip Solomon, MD, FRCS(C), otolaryngologist-facial, head and neck surgeon in Toronto, says Articol, a permanent injectable dermal filler, can reduce the appearance of scars by elevating the skin. It is often used in conjunction with the Ultra Pulse CO2 laser, renowned for treating burn victims in the US Military. The laser smoothes down the elevated edges of the scar while tightening the underlying collagen. Dr. Solomon says three treatments approximately three months apart are usually needed depending on the

severity of the scar. Each treatment takes about an hour and requires seven to 10 days to heal as skin can appear flaky with minor scabs. "This treatment is typically only done by surgeons and dermatologists trained in laser skin resurfacing," says Dr. Solomon. Articol fillers cost \$800 per vial (most people need two, says Dr. Solomon) and the Ultra Pulse CO2 laser treatment can cost \$1,500 to \$5,000 depending on the severity of the scars and the coverage needed. People with darker skin may not be a candidate for this procedure, says Dr. Solomon.



CONDITION 3 **SUPERFICIAL CAPILLARIES**

If you look in the mirror and see little red threads around your nose, cheeks and chin, they are probably broken blood vessels, otherwise known as superficial capillaries. Almost all Canadians over the age of 50 have these, says Dr Tom Woo, MD, FRCPC(C), a dermatologist in Calgary.

The broken blood vessels are a result of a combination of aging (skin gets thinner and therefore the vessels underneath become more visible as we age); skin type (fairer skinned people are more likely to have visible vessels) and sun damage (because sun causes blood vessel formation). There are also studies that implicate smoking and chronic lung disease as a cause of visible or broken blood vessels.

But preventing this condition is as easy as using a good sunscreen: protect from the sun, and you'll be protecting from broken blood vessels, too. Drinking alcohol in moderation and leading an active lifestyle may also help.

When it comes to treatment, laser is really your only option, says Dr. Woo. He recommends vascular lasers such as Versapulse, which specifically target blood vessels. Treatments cost around \$200 to \$500 per treatment and results are usually noticed within two to four sessions.

CONDITION 4 **ADULT ACNE**

Thought you outgrew acne when you left puberty behind? Unfortunately, for some Canadians, there's no escaping the past. Whiteheads, blackheads, papules, pustules and cysts can pop up again in our 30s and for some, stick around into our 60s.

Bacteria buildup and clogged pores are still the culprits for acne, as well as genetics and our environment. When it comes to prevention, Dr. Earl Minuk, MD, FRCPC, a dermatologist in Winnipeg, says removing makeup daily is a must, as well as using oil-free makeup. Prevention might also lie in a great facial cleansing system such as the Obagi CLENZIderm M.D. Line (\$149, at medical esthetic clinics). The physician-dispensed acne system uses a liquified form of benzoyl peroxide, known as SoluZyl Technology, that penetrates deep into the pores for fast results.

For a more aggressive treatment, Dr. Minuk recommends Blue Light Photodynamic Therapy. Patients simply sit under the special light that works to kill acne bacteria in the skin with two painless 15-minute sessions (\$50 to \$75 a treatment) twice a week for six weeks. It's usually combined with some sort of topical therapy for ultimate results. After all treatments are finished, a monthly touch-up may be needed for maintaining results. e

STOCK UP

If you have acne flareups and problem skin, keep these products in your medicine cabinet:

1. SKINCEUTICALS PHYTO CORRECTIVE GEL, \$65, at med spas, www.skinceuticals.com/canada
2. HOLISTIC VANITY SKINCARE LINE, \$28, at any of Pure + Simple location or online at pureandsimple.ca.
3. KORRES PURIFYING NATURAL CLAY MASK, \$44, at drugstores.
4. VICHY NORMADERM HYDRATING ACNE CARE, \$29.95, at drugstores.
5. ANTI-REDNESS COMPLEX BY ALYRIA, \$70 at spas and clinics.
6. AVON CLEARSKIN CLEAR EMERGENCY INSTANT SPOT TREATMENT, \$7.99, avon.ca.



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