



The Rosacea-Seborrheic Dermatitis Link

Often, people with rosacea also have seborrheic dermatitis. Find out more about these inflammatory skin disorders, and how to treat both.

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Rosacea and seborrheic dermatitis are both inflammatory skin disorders that cause redness, lesions, and itching, and they frequently occur together. But despite having much in common, rosacea and seborrheic dermatitis are actually unrelated inflammatory skin disorders.

The main symptoms of rosacea include:

- Red, flushed skin
- Stinging or burning
- Visible blood vessels on the skin, which look like tangles of fine red lines
- A red, enlarged nose
- Papules and pustules (types of pimples that look like acne)

Seborrheic dermatitis, like rosacea, is an inflammatory skin disorder. It affects the skin on the face, scalp, and sometimes other areas of the body. The most common symptoms include:

- Scaly areas that may itch or burn
- Patches that appear greasy or yellowish
- Dandruff flakes on the scalp

Seborrheic dermatitis most commonly appears inside the ears, on the forehead, in the eyebrows, and around the nose. Though its cause is unknown, it's related to the glands in the skin that produce oil. Contributing factors can include:

- Stress
- Hormone fluctuations
- Extreme weather, particularly cold

The Differences Between Rosacea and Seborrheic Dermatitis

With seborrheic dermatitis, a yellow, greasy scale is typical, and the specific areas involved may provide a clue for diagnosis since rosacea and seborrheic dermatitis affect different parts of the face, says Clare A. Pipkin, MD, a dermatologist and assistant professor of medicine at Duke University Medical Center.

With seborrheic dermatitis, "eyebrows, scalp, nasolabial folds [skin around the nose], and external ear canals may be affected," Dr. Pipkin explains. The absence of acne-like bumps is another big difference. "In contrast to rosacea, seborrheic dermatitis will not have pustules," says Pipkin.

When You Have Both Rosacea and Seborrheic Dermatitis

Seborrheic dermatitis may be the most common skin condition to occur along with rosacea. It's estimated that between 25 and 28 percent of those with rosacea also have facial or scalp seborrheic dermatitis.

Why does this happen and is there a connection? Experts don't really know. "From clinical experience, it may be that these conditions are more common in certain skin types," says Amy J. Derick, MD, a board-certified dermatologist in Barrington, Ill., such as fair skin.

Both conditions together can cause a number of unattractive symptoms on the face — combined they can create increased redness, discomfort, and crusty lesions. But the right treatment can help ease the effects of both inflammatory skin disorders.

Treating Rosacea and Seborrheic Dermatitis

When you've got both rosacea and seborrheic dermatitis, it's important to see a dermatologist to have both treated. Though you can't cure either of them, you can manage each condition's symptoms with medication. Treatment may be slightly different when you have both conditions — for example, seborrheic dermatitis is often treated with topical steroids to ease inflammation, but persistent use of steroids is known to make rosacea symptoms worse.

Instead, people with both rosacea and seborrheic dermatitis may need an antifungal treatment for the seborrheic dermatitis. Why this works isn't clear, but antifungals seem to help clear the condition and won't worsen rosacea symptoms. Taking antibiotics (oral and topical) and avoiding rosacea triggers can help keep any rosacea symptoms at bay.



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