

Good-bye Acne, Rosacea, Rashes, and Accutane

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Acne, rosacea, or rashes are conditions that many people have personal experience with, like it or not. The good news is that they are all treatable and you don't have to settle or subject yourself to harmful medications.

Our skin is an external sign of our internal health as well as our largest organ. Skin health can also be an influential factor affecting self-confidence or lack thereof. In today's world, it is important to be an advocate for our health and skin by empowering ourselves with education and wisdom.

My personal experience with acne began as a teen. Not just some minor breakouts during hormonal changes, but the continuous aggravation of deep, painful acne that would leave scars for years to come. I had never heard of naturopathic medicine and found myself being subjected to years of antibiotics, drying topical ointments, and no nutritional guidance about my nearly fat free diet full of gluten, sugar, and dairy.

Guess what? My skin didn't improve which is no surprise to me now. At a desperate attempt, I was prescribed the drug Accutane in high school. I naively and regretfully trusted my doctor, even at the mention of it causing birth defects. Viola, what a miracle drug; my acne decreased and I was thrilled. Forget about the short and long term risks to my liver, offspring, or skin health!

Fast-forward to college and the acne returned with a vengeance. Of course, it made sense at the time to do another round of this supposed wonder drug Accutane. Within weeks of being on this drug, I was unable to fully open my jaw to eat as the skin around my mouth was so dry, painful, and peeling off. I learned that one of the numerous side effects of the drug is extreme dryness of the skin in addition to birth defects, anemia, joint pain, liver toxicity, and depression. Inflammatory bowel disease was such a concerning side effect that consumers who were affected were awarded a total of \$33 million in damages after taking this drug. Accutane was taken off the market in June 2009, but unfortunately it is still available under other names including isotretinoin. Users beware, there are better solutions for acne that don't pose a risk to you and your future children!

I learned my lesson and steered clear of antibiotics, toxic drugs like Accutane, drying topicals, and eventually learned how to work WITH the body and address the cause with a naturopathic physician.

What is the cause of acne? Often, acne is a sign that our liver is over-burdened or not functioning optimally. Similar to an overflowing garbage can contaminating other areas, our liver can show dysfunction by alerting your body with acne, rashes,

or eczema. Paying attention to these warning signs on our skin and addressing the root cause of the issue can promote healing and prevent chronic disease.

Acne may be caused by one or a combination of factors including hormonal imbalance, food sensitivities, medication, or poor digestive health. Liver health is typically addressed with people with acne considering all of these factors can affect the liver negatively.

Some things people prone to acne can do until they see an ND would be to decrease the amount of alcohol, caffeine, and sugar you're consuming. Choosing foods and cosmetics that are non-toxic is essential to not overburden the liver's ability to clear toxicants. Your liver plays a role in processing hormones as well so decreasing burdens through plastics, poor quality meat, and excess soy can benefit you and your skin. Encouraging sweating and dry skin brushing are great additions to help process and eliminate toxicants from your body and skin. Avoiding chemicals by investing in a shower filter can improve skin and overall health as well. Ewg.org is a helpful online resource to evaluate skin care products and foods that are the most and least harmful to your overall health.

Diet is an integral part of any treatment since our digestive system plays a significant role in more than just digestion. Avoiding potential triggers such as dairy, caffeine, gluten, and sugar may help clear up skin lesions. Encouraging items such as broccoli, cauliflower, kale, brussels sprouts, cucumber, celery, lemon, blueberries, artichokes, beets, and turmeric can help improve liver and skin health as well.

Another skin condition with the word acne is acne rosacea, although it is quite different than acne vulgaris that most are familiar with. Rosacea is a skin disorder that typically affects adults and is limited to the nose, cheeks, chin, and forehead. Often those affected have facial skin that becomes oily, red or blotchy, and bumpy with small blood vessels visible.

It is very common for people with rosacea to have decreased stomach acid and/or a deficiency in certain B vitamins. Many people with rosacea have digestive disturbances and may be on acid blockers if they have acid reflux. Ironically, these medications will likely perpetuate their condition since the cause of already low stomach acid is not being addressed, but rather aggravated. Rosacea is a treatable and reversible condition, once the cause of imbalance is addressed.

Hives, unique rashes, or itchy skin can be frustrating for people of all ages. Once again, finding the cause is recommended to avoid future concerns. For many people, the cause is a combination of factors related most to poor digestive health, but may also include hypothyroidism, candida overgrowth, or even hepatitis C.

How is our gut responsible for urticaria? You may be catching on that our gastrointestinal health is a part of various aspects of health including over 80% of

our immune function and serotonin production. When our mucosal integrity becomes impaired by certain factors such as antibiotics, food sensitivities, and a high stress (high cortisol) lifestyle, our digestive system becomes a 'leaky gut'. This disturbing term is what happens to the desired tight junctions of the intestinal tract. Substances 'leak' out into the blood stream creating an overactive immune system on high alert. These substances are seen as foreign invaders which creates an inflammatory response resulting in symptoms ranging from rashes to pain to chronic disease. When the digestive system continues to be subjected to offending agents, the body continues to create inflammation resulting in allergies and skin issues such as eczema, hives, or various rashes.

What can you do? Healing your gut is imperative through avoidance of offending agents and adding in various safe and effective treatments recommended by your naturopathic physician. An individualized combination of probiotics, glutamine, healing herbs, garlic, or enzymes may be recommended. This healing process may take months to completely heal, but most people notice a positive change in a matter of days since the digestive system can initiate cell turnover and begin to repair itself in 3-6 days.

Homeopathic medicines can be incredibly fast acting and successful in cases of eczema and rashes or hives. It is not uncommon for patients who have struggled for years with eczema or urticaria to notice drastic improvements within days on a well selected homeopathic remedy. Homeopathy increases healing, therefore, other mental or physical symptoms may improve as well in addition to decreasing or eliminating frustrating skin conditions.

Our skin can be an external picture of our internal health. If you are frustrated with your skin concerns and are ready to heal, a naturopathic physician may be a great addition to your health care team. A free 10 minute consultation or comprehensive appointment with Dr. E may be scheduled at 480-767-7119 when you are ready to take control of your health.

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