

# soothe your skin

Redness,  
peeling,  
stinging—  
ouch!

Give your  
fragile  
complexion  
the TLC it  
craves with  
these  
dermatologist-  
tested  
solutions.

**Sure, a rosy glow is a sign of a kick-butt workout (go you!),** but if you're still sporting that flush long after you've left the locker room, you're probably among the 60 percent of people in the United States who say they have sensitive skin—a number that's doubled during the past 30 years, according to Jessica Wu, M.D., a dermatologist in Los Angeles. Why the increase? Derms suspect that one of the main reasons is product misuse. "Women are choosing the wrong products for their skin," says Howard Sobel, M.D., a cosmetic dermatologist in New York City. That can lead to inflammation, the root of all redness. If you don't treat it, the condition may affect your complexion, making it more vulnerable to wrinkle-inducing damage, Dr. Sobel says. But now, help is on the way! We identified the five most common sensitive-skin complaints and asked top docs to share their best soothing secrets.

By Krista Bennett DeMaio  
Photographs by Michael David Adams

Steer





**Flakiness** If you're experiencing scaliness, your skin is sending you an SOS: "It's so inflamed that the cells are lifting, which results in peeling," says Debra Luftman, M.D., a dermatologist in Los Angeles. The probable cause is an irritant in one of your products or an allergic reaction to an ingredient.

**Calm the culprits** Treat inflammation with a 2.5 percent hydrocortisone cream and stop using scrubs, retinoids and alpha hydroxyl acids. Also, fortify your skin with a moisturizer that contains niacin, like **StriVectin-SD for Sensitive Skin** (\$79, [strivectin.com](http://strivectin.com)). You should see a difference in just three days, notes Leslie Baumann, M.D., a dermatologist in Miami.

**Fight future flare-ups** If it's an allergic reaction, which is characterized by a swollen rash, go to your dermatologist, who can ID the allergen with a patch test. (Preservatives and fragrances are two biggies.) Choose products that are labeled "fragrance-free" and avoid those with a laundry list of ingredients. "Fewer ingredients mean fewer chances to react to something," says Jeanine Downie, M.D., a dermatologist in Montclair, New Jersey. Reconsider your cleanser, too. Foaming washes can strip away protective oils. Opt for a milky formula and make sure alcohol isn't one of the first ingredients. We like **Burt's Bees Natural Skin Solutions Sensitive Facial Cleanser** (\$10, [burtsbees.com](http://burtsbees.com)).

clear of harsh, abrasive scrubs.





**Stinging** Ever apply a lotion and then feel a burning sensation? Doctors aren't sure why, but certain ingredients irritate nerve endings in your skin.

**Calm the culprits** Cooling facial mists or masks with anti-inflammatories offer quick relief. Good ones: **Philosophy Hope Springs Eternal Deep Sea Ultra-Fine Hydrating Mist** (\$20, philosophy.com) and **One Cucumber Aloe Calming Mask** (\$3, target.com).

**Fight future flare-ups** Avoid common irritants, such as vitamin C, lactic acid, glycolic acid and avobenzone, an ingredient in some sunscreens. Instead, use a mineral-based sunblock with titanium dioxide or zinc oxide; both have anti-inflammatory properties. Find them in **Yes to Cucumbers Daily Calming Moisturizer SPF 30** (\$15, drugstores).

Stop the  
sting:  
Avoid  
common  
skin  
irritants.

**Itchy body bumps** These patches may be an allergic reaction to something in the environment. A study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* found a link between air pollution and rashes. If your spots are clustered mostly on the backs of your arms, they could be keratosis pilaris (KP), which is eczema that occurs when follicles get plugged up with dry skin.

**Calm the culprits** Relieve itchiness with an oral antihistamine, like Claritin. To treat KP, slather on lotion with urea, such as **Eucerin Everyday Protection Body Lotion SPF 15** (\$9, drugstores), to help exfoliate. Use **Bio-Oil PurCellin Oil** (\$20, drugstores) for spot treatment.

**Fight future flare-ups** Ditch scented laundry detergents; many people are allergic to them, says Suzanne Kilmer, M.D., a dermatologist in Sacramento, California. Control KP by taking short showers and applying a rich cream while your skin is damp. We like **J.R. Watkins Naturals Apothecary Coconut Milk & Honey Hand & Body Lotion** (\$10, jrwatkins.com).




**Redness** If your skin is an angry shade of crimson, with broken blood vessels and acnelike bumps, you could have rosacea. This condition afflicts more than 16 million Americans, typically after the age of 30, and may be triggered by hormonal changes and sun exposure. Flushing occurs when blood vessels dilate quickly, a process brought on by sun, stress, spicy foods, alcohol, coffee and even exercise.

**Calm the culprits** To get the red out, reach for a cream that contains anti-inflammatories, such as green tea—found in **Proactiv Green Tea Moisturizer** (\$35, [discoverproactiv.com](http://discoverproactiv.com))—feverfew and caffeine, to help constrict blood vessels. For severe, recurring inflammation or red bumps, see your doc. He or she can prescribe a topical gel, such as Finacea (azelaic acid), or an anti-inflammatory pill, like Oracea.

**Fight future flare-ups** There's no known cure for rosacea, but avoiding triggers will help keep it under control. (Need help identifying them? Download the Rosacea App for your smartphone or iPad.) One thing you shouldn't skip is the gym. Working out lowers stress, which, along with sun damage, is one of the main causes of rosacea, explains Dr. Downie, who tells her patients that drinking ice-cold water while they exercise may help ease symptoms. If you have severe redness, laser therapy and light treatments can reduce the number of blood vessels near the skin's surface so you'll suffer fewer outbreaks over time.



Red in the face?  
See a derm.



**Pimples** Sadly, breakouts don't stop when we graduate from high school. According to Olay, the average age of acne patients is now 27, compared with 21 just 10 years ago. Experts believe this may be because of such factors as fluctuating hormone levels and increased use of antiaging cosmetics.

**Calm the culprits** The top three ingredients in your antiacne arsenal are salicylic acid, to unclog pores—found in **Clearasil UltraRapid Action Seal-to-Clear Gel** (\$10, drugstores)—benzoyl peroxide, to kill bacteria; and sulfur, to relieve redness. While you're zapping zits, don't forget to use moisturizer or your oil glands might produce even more pimple-causing sebum. Twice a day, apply a noncomedogenic moisturizer, such as **Eau Thermale Avene Serenage Nutri-Redensifying Night Cream** (\$49, [aveneusa.com](http://aveneusa.com) for stores).

**Fight future flare-ups** Keep pores clear so that new pimples don't form. Dr. Kilmer recommends using the **Clarisonic Deep Pore Cleansing Brush** with the **Clarisonic Mia** (\$25 and \$149, [clarisonic.com](http://clarisonic.com)), which has oscillating bristles that gently clean and exfoliate. And watch out for sneaky pore cloggers, like hair conditioner, says Dr. Baumann, who suggests cleansing skin after conditioning. Also, spread a thin layer of benzoyl peroxide on pimple-prone areas—your face, chest and even your derriere—before breaking a sweat.

Instead of popping zits,  
use a spot treatment.

get gorgeous :

# Fake Flawless Skin

Bad complexion day? Save face instantly with these redness-reducing makeup tricks.

Neutralize ruddiness with green-tinted **Physicians Formula Redness Correcting Moisturizer** (\$17, drugstores).

Camouflage spots with a lightweight base, like peptide-rich **FusionBeauty PrimeResults Tinted Moisturizer + SPF 15 Sunscreen** (\$40, Ulta stores).

**Bare Escentuals bareMinerals Redness Remedy** (\$27, bareescentuals.com) gives your complexion a warm glow and calms skin with aloe vera and oatmeal.

To define your cheeks without adding rosiness, use nonirritating **MAC Mineralize Skinfinish Natural in Give Me Sun!** (\$27, maccosmetics.com).

Hide and soothe scarlet splotches with cucumber-infused **Almay Wake Up Undereye Concealer** (\$9, drugstores). The built-in brush lets you place the color precisely where you need it.