

Title: Top 5 things to know about Perioral Dermatitis

Author: Bethany Cook

Date: 7-18-2008

Key words: perioral dermatitis, facial rash, topical steroids

Abstract: Perioral dermatitis is a common skin condition affecting primarily women from 20-45 years old. It is characterized by redness, papules, and scaling around the mouth, chin, nose, and eyes. This rash may be caused by a number of factors, but the majority of cases are caused by the use of topical steroids on the face. Other potential causes include cosmetics, sunscreens, and certain allergens. Treatment includes stopping any topical steroids, and may necessitate initiation of prescription antibiotics or topical anti-inflammatory creams. Treatment choice is determined by the severity of the patient's condition.

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Top 5 things to know about Perioral Dermatitis

1. What is perioral dermatitis?

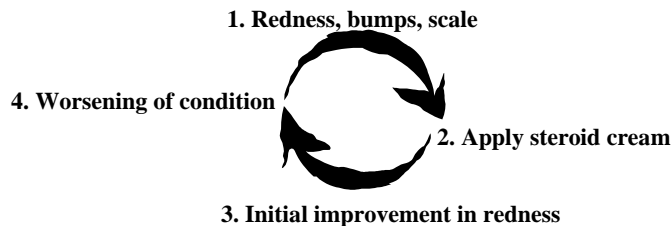
First, the terms: dermatitis means *red or irritated skin*, and perioral means *around the mouth*. Perioral dermatitis is a common skin problem that can look like acne, but is only found around the mouth, nose, chin, and sometimes eyes. It affects people differently, but the skin is often red and bumpy. Some people also develop pus-filled bumps (pustules) and flakes on their face. There may also be burning or itching involved.

Perioral dermatitis affects 1 out of every 100 people. It most commonly occurs in women between the ages of 20-45 years old, but can occur at any age, male or female. If treated, it usually resolves within 1-2 months. If left untreated, it can last for months to a year.

2. What causes it?

Half of all cases are caused by using prescription-strength steroid creams on the face. This may be due to applying steroids creams directly on the face, or applying them on the body and then touching the face. Applying prescription-strength steroid creams to treat the redness on the face may look like it is improving your condition at first, but then it starts a cycle which makes the redness and bumps worse (see figure below).

It is unknown what causes the other half of all cases of perioral dermatitis, but some of the possible causes include allergic reactions, hormones, cosmetics, pregnancy, and infection.



3. How do you treat it?

The most important step in treating perioral dermatitis is to **stop any steroid creams or ointments**, cosmetics, sunscreens, or harsh facial cleansers that you are using on your face. Wash your face with warm water and a non-soap cleanser.

Your physician will determine the need for prescription treatment to help with the redness and irritation. Potential treatments include topical antibiotics, oral antibiotics, or anti-inflammatory agents. If given an antibiotic, you must complete the full course of treatment as prescribed by your doctor, or else you may have a flare-up in your condition when you stop the medication.

4. Will it come back?

Your condition may return, although it is less likely to do so if you complete your full course of treatment determined by your doctor and follow the rules for prevention listed below (see #5).

5. How do you prevent it?

- Avoid the use of steroid creams on the face for more than 3-5 days.
- Do not use any prescription-strength steroid creams on the face, unless prescribed by your doctor.
- If using steroid creams on the body, wash hands well after applying the cream.
- Avoid any irritants or known triggers for flare-ups, such as certain cosmetics or topical creams.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Your doctor or clinic is the best source of information for any specific questions about your condition.
- Am Acad of Dermatology: http://www.aad.org/public/publications/pamphlets/common_perioral.html
- National Institutes of Health: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001455.html>



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