THE CENTER
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Moody Skin

When your hormones go off the rails, so does your skin. But there are smart ways to get your complexion back on track. By Judith Newman

PHOTOGRAPHED BY NICOLAS MOORE

1 Breakouts

I discovered in a way I never could have imagined what hormones do to your skin: Fourteen years ago, I had in vitro fertilization. IVF demands the injection of a drug that results in multiple eggs—and buckets of estrogen. The glow of pregnancy? Try the glow of daily shots of Fertinex. I was like a giant, hormonally deranged—but exceedingly dewy—fireflly. Now, as I stagger toward menopause and gulp my tiny daily estrogen supplement (it prevents hot flashes...and homicide), I think about those halcyon skin days of IVF. And I have to stop myself from swallowing the entire bottle of Estrad

drunken bridesmaid? The culprit could be fluctuations in estrogen, says David Bank, an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Columbia University/Presbyterian Hospital. The hormone increases nitric oxide in the body, which causes blood vessels in the face to dilate. And while no clear link has been established between hormone changes and rosacea, many women with the skin condition report that redness is more severe in the middle of their menstrual cycle, when ovulation puts estrogen levels at their highest. For younger women, the Pill may help control flushing. For perimenopausal women who have flushing and hot flashes, a very low dose of estrogen sometimes smooths out hormone levels—and the heated response to them.

CLOCK STOPPERS

2 Pigmentation

TIME TO GET TESTED?

3 Redness