

# THE CENTER

FOR DERMATOLOGY, COSMETIC & LASER SURGERY

OUTLET: ALLURE  
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Amber Valletta  
Her Gutsy Haircut & Supermodel Stories

Bright,  
Sunny  
Makeup

Reveals Colors for Lips, Eyes, and Nails

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## Seeing Red

Red may be a lovely shade for wine and roses, but it's a problem when it takes over your face. Here, the most advanced products and techniques for restoring skin to its natural state. By Jolene Edgar

### Straight Flush

Red lipstick says confidence. Red cheeks, just the opposite. Blushing or flushing—two words for the same thing—is, in part, genetic. The condition tends to burn most fiercely in the cheeks, says Wu, because the vessels there are large and sit close to the surface of the skin. But for some, the chest and neck are major hot zones, often flushing independently of the face due to nerves or hormones.

"Some people are born with extra layers of blood vessels and highly sensitive nerve endings in their skin," explains Amy Wechsler, an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in New York City. When triggered by alcohol, emotions, spicy foods, the sun, heat, or nicotine, the tiny muscles in blood vessels relax, flooding skin with blood. Regardless of what provokes a flush and wherever it appears, any of these tricks can help fight the fire.

#### First try...

- **COOL IT** Sucking ice chips or holding a frozen water bottle on your neck sounds low-tech, but it can reduce a flush by "stimulating a receptor at the back of the throat to constrict blood vessels in a move to maintain core body temperature," says Zeichner. Misting your face with mineral water, like Evian Facial Spray, can also cool the skin.

#### If that doesn't work...

- **BE PROACTIVE** The first-of-its-kind prescription cream Mirvaso works like topical Visine, constricting dilated capillaries within 30 minutes. In the morning, apply

a thin layer of the white gel regular moisturizer to areas of blush. "It dramatically reduces the intensity of flushing, and can be used long-term without side effects," says David Bank, an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Columbia University/Presbyterian Hospital.

- **ZAP IT** Pulsed-dye lasers, like the Vbeam, can close capillaries, so when you experience anything that ordinarily causes a flush, it will affect fewer blood vessels. After three treatments, spaced a month apart, you can expect a 50 percent improvement—"a soft pink blush as opposed to fire-engine red," says Bank.

- **POP A PILL** Under stress, the body pumps out flush-inducing histamines and adrenaline. (Histamine-rich foods, like nuts, aged cheeses, and alcohol—red wine and champagne, in particular—can also make vessels flare.) Taken prophylactically, antihistamines, like Allegra, can curb this, says Jeannette Graf, an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center. And a low dose of prescription beta-blockers can prevent the effects of an adrenaline rush. Ask a doctor about these options if you flush while speaking in public.

#### If none of the above helps...

- **CALL A DOCTOR** Most flushing is harmless, but there's one type that's not. If accompanied by insomnia, irritability, or weight loss, persistent redness on the chest can signal thyroid trouble, says Bank. See a doctor to rule it out.

**TREAT IT WITH:** "Lasers hit the iron molecules in vessels, heating and sealing them from the inside out," says Bank. Note that your skin may look

SHOP

blush. "It dramatically reduces redness for up to 12 hours, significantly decreases the intensity of flushing, and can be used long-term without side effects," says David Bank, an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Columbia University/Presbyterian Hospital.

SHOP

### Rosacea: A Primer

If you notice redness on your face or chest that waxes and wanes but never goes away entirely, you may have a case of rosacea. Scientists consider the condition something of a mystery, but most believe a mix of genetics and sun damage kick-start this tendency to flush easily and often, at almost everything—and sometimes nothing at all. "There's an extreme sensitivity to environmental factors coupled with overactive blood vessels," says Zeichner. "Instead of a momentary blush, the redness can last for hours." Everything that causes flushing can lead to a flare-up of rosacea. Sun is the number-one trigger, according to the National Rosacea Society, affecting 81 percent of people, and stress ranks second, at 79 percent. Over time, the constant ruddiness can change the physiology of the skin. The muscles in blood-vessel walls thicken from opening and closing, resulting in a sort of permanent flush visible across the nose and condition is left untreated, capillaries and red bumps

they take a hot shower or have a glass of wine," says Graf. Exercise and high temperatures can also cause the color to deepen and spread.

**TREAT IT WITH:** Easy fixes include exercising in an air-conditioned room, cutting out spicy foods, and minor adjustments, like leaving the lid on your latte to keep steam off your face—whatever it takes to keep skin cool. (See "Straight Flush.") Use products made for sensitive skin, with ingredients that hydrate (the humectants in La Roche-Posay Toleriane Ultra help), soothe (Simple Nourishing 24HR Day/Night Cream has antioxidants for this), and strengthen the skin's protective moisture barrier (ceramide-rich Elizabeth Arden Lift and Firm Day Cream). Ask a dermatologist if your skin can tolerate retinoids, which, along with sunscreen, can stop the release of inflammatory chemicals that create new blood vessels, says Graf.

**IF YOU SEE:** Patches of red with scattered broken capillaries

**YOU MAY HAVE:** Moderate rosacea. The tiny vessels aren't really broken; they're just visible below the skin because their clear walls have lost elasticity over time and are swollen with blood.

**TREAT IT WITH:** "Lasers hit the iron molecules in vessels, heating and sealing them from the inside out," says Bank. Note that your skin may look

instant redness  
and nose that worsens  
circumstances

**YOU MAY HAVE:** Mild rosacea. "Many women with rosacea look flushed all the time but then get even redder when