Hot Beverages, Spices, Alcohol Can Trigger Rosacea Blush

Q. I have rosacea. Is there a special diet that can prevent my facial flushing from worsening?

A. There’s no diet, per se, but there are certain foods you might want to avoid, because they can sometimes trigger flushing. Suspect foods vary from one rosacea sufferer to the next, so you’ll need to pay attention to which foods are a problem for you.

Rosacea (pronounced ro-ZAY-shuh) is a progressive acne-like skin disorder that affects about one in 20 Americans, typically between the ages of 30 and 60. Slightly more women are affected than men. It first appears as a blushing of the cheeks, nose, forehead or chin that may be mistaken for a sunburn. During the early stages, the flushing comes and goes, but left untreated, the condition progresses and the flushing doesn’t go away. Often, it is mistaken as adult acne. But advanced rosacea can result in more conspicuous and permanent facial changes, including excess skin tissue causing a bulbous nose and dilated blood vessels.

There is no known cure for rosacea.

Treatment is individualized and may include prescription skin care products or medication. Avoidance of whatever seems to trigger flare-ups is also key.

Common Triggers. A comprehensive survey of rosacea sufferers conducted by the National Rosacea Society in 1999 identified a host of self-reported dietary and environmental culprits that aggravate rosacea’s telltale blush. Besides the top triggers of sun and heat, about half of the more than 3,000 sufferers surveyed said wine, particularly red wine, exacerbated the condition.

However, even though the French-named rosacea pustule de vin, meaning pimples of wine, symptoms can be just as severe in teetotalers.

About a third of sufferers ranked other foods and beverages high on the list of triggers, including hard liquor, cayenne pepper, hot coffee, chocolate, tomatoes and hot tea. Another one-quarter or fewer of sufferers fingered citrus fruit, beer and black pepper.

Because these results were self-reported, they might be nothing more than coincidence. Still, more than 78% of survey respondents said that eliminating the triggers had helped reduce their flare-ups.

What to Do. There have been limited reports of some rosacea sufferers finding relief by using topical skin care products containing emu oil, aloe vera, calendula or tea tree oil. But if you have rosacea, or think you may have it, see a dermatologist before you self-medicate.

Top Triggers to Avoid

• Sun
• Heat (hot weather or hot showers)
• Extreme cold
• Strenuous exercise
• Stress
• Alcohol
• Hot foods/liquids (e.g. coffee, tea)
• Spicy foods

Meatless Quorn Comes to America... Amid Considerable Controversy

Q. I’ve heard controversy about a new food called Quorn. What is it?

A. Quorn (pronounced “kworn”) is the brand name of a line of products containing mycoprotein, a high-protein food in the fungi family, which includes mushrooms, morels and truffles. It’s been available in Europe for nearly two decades as a popular meat substitute.

A Fungus Among Us. Mycoprotein is the product made from the fungus Fusarium venenatum, discovered near London in the late 1960’s. The fungus is now commercially harvested in tanks using fermentation to produce mycoprotein, which is then mixed with eggs whites and flavorings and formed into meat-like shapes. What distinguishes it from other meat alternatives is a fibrous texture similar to that of meat.

This past January, the Food and Drug Administration accepted mycoprotein as GRAS (“generally recognized as safe”), allowing Quorn to be sold in the U.S. While no one questions its nutritional benefits—it is hailed as highly nutritious—controversy is already fermenting over its labeling and safety.

What’s in a Name? The controversy: Although all mushrooms are fungi, not all fungi are mushrooms, and mycoprotein is not “mushroom in origin,” as stated in Quorn’s ads and on its packaging. The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), a nonprofit health advocacy group, has filed complaints with the FDA, charging that Quorn is deceptively labeled and should disclose its fungal origin. Also at issue is the safety of mycoprotein, which contains novel proteins untested for allergenicity. Although allergic reactions to F. venenatum appear to be low, there have been isolated reports of adverse reactions, mostly vomiting and diarrhea.

Nutrition to Boast About. Controversy aside, mycoprotein has an impressive nutrition profile: high-quality protein, lots of fiber (six grams per 3 1/2 ounces), with less fat and calories than skinless chicken breast. Moreover, its fat is mostly unsaturated. But while mycoprotein itself earns nutrition kudos, some Quorn products have added saturated fat, trans fats and sodium—too much to be healthy. Read labels carefully.

EN’s Bottom Line. If you’re looking for an alternative meat source, Quorn may be worth a try. It tastes surprisingly like the real thing and some, but not all, Quorn products offer good nutrition. If you experience side effects, report them to the website, www.quorncomplaints.com. CSPI is collecting this data to present to the FDA.

Write to us if you have a question. We’ll answer those of most interest to our readers. We regret, however, that we cannot personally respond. Send to: Environmental Nutrition, Inc. 52 Riverside Drive, Suite 15-A New York, NY 10024-6599 fax: (212) 362-2066 www.environmentalnutrition.com: click “Contact Us”