

Better Homes and Gardens

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sensitive types

Pink isn't always pretty. It could be your skin trying to tell you something. Read on to find out what could be causing your sensitivity, then turn the page for expert tips to handle it.

BY LIESA GOINS

Do you have...

1 TIGHT OR ITCHY SKIN?

Your cleansing routine is all wrong. "When patients come to me with this complaint, I immediately ask what soaps they're using," says Kate Holcomb, M.D., a dermatologist in New Orleans. Harsh face and body washes strip away your natural oils. (If what you're using foams a lot or contains cocamidopropyl betaine, ditch it.) This causes microscopic cracks between the cells; the cracks let in bacteria and irritants, leading to redness and itching. No fun.

2 UNCOMFORTABLE BURNING OR STINGING?

You've overdosed on antiaging ingredients and gone overboard with scrubs. We get it—you're a product junkie—but too much of a good thing can be really, really bad. "Many wrinkle-fighting ingredients like retinol and alpha hydroxy acids work by speeding up cell turnover, revealing a younger, fresher-looking layer beneath," Holcomb says. A follow-up scrub rubs that fresh new layer raw, hence your discomfort.

3 TINY PIMPLES, REDNESS, AND BROKEN CAPILLARIES?

This could be more serious than simple sensitivity—you could have rosacea (a doctor can tell you for sure). "It's a chronic skin condition that sends too much blood to your skin, causing flushing and sometimes little pustules on the cheeks and nose," says Leslie Baumann, M.D., a dermatologist in Miami and author of *The Skin Type Solution*. Any product that's not super gentle can make the symptoms of rosacea worse.

4 RED BUMPS?

You might be allergic to one or more of your products. When your body has an allergic reaction, your immune cells kick into high gear and start sounding the alarm, says Neal Schultz, M.D., a dermatologist for DermTV.com. You'll get red, itchy bumps (not pimples), which can turn into flaky patches. "Anyone can be allergic to just about any ingredient, but the most frequent offenders are added fragrance, artificial dyes, and even preservatives like parabens," Schultz says.