

your sensitive skin questions, answered

Sensitive skin flaring up for no reason? Let's get to the bottom of it.



Do you ever feel like your sensitive skin reacts at the slightest provocation, or even over nothing at all? It's frustrating, but the truth is that there's *always* a reason behind flare-ups. Finding the root cause can be tough, though – so we sat down with our in-house expert skin therapist for a quick Q&A on the most common culprits. Read on for a breakdown of what can cause your skin to flare up for seemingly no reason – and what you can do to stop it!

Q: First question – when our skin gets red and irritated, is there REALLY always a reason?

A: Yes! But it's not always readily apparent. Sensitive skin reactions can be caused by a wide array of factors including genetics, physiology, lifestyle and environment – so it's important to pay attention when your skin freaks out! Take a moment to think about what could be causing your flare-up. It'll help clue you in on why you're reacting, and what you can do to prevent it next time around.

Q: That sounds great in theory. But thinking from a practical perspective... Where do we start? What do we look out for?

A: It can be a little overwhelming, so let's break it down. The first thing you want to think about is genetics. **Sensitive skin** can be inherited, which means that the skin's outer layer lets irritants and allergens through, causing a reaction. People with severe sensitive skin are also likely to be more prone to flushing, asthma and allergies, and their skin tends to be more delicate than average – but it can be managed with appropriate care!

Q: What about skin sensitivity that isn't caused by genetics?

A: A lot of factors can cause skin to weaken and increase sensitivity. This can lead to **sensitization**, which is your skin reacting to anything from your environment to cosmetic ingredients, over-exfoliation, smoking or even the weather. Sensitized skin can happen to anybody, including people who also have genetically sensitive skin.

Q: That's a lot of potential causes! Can you explain more about physiology? It sounds like it's related to genetics.

A: When we talk about physiology's role in sensitive skin, we're mainly concerned with stress and hormonal fluctuations. Stress causes a chemical reaction in your body that makes skin more reactive. For example, stress increases production of the hormone cortisol, which tells your skin glands to make more oil. And while we're on the topic, normal hormonal fluctuations can cause more than monthly breakouts; they can also contribute to sensitive skin flare-ups. So, if your skin reacts during times of stress – or around the same time every month – hormones are a likely culprit.

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Q: You mentioned lifestyle choices as another contributing factor. Can you go more in-depth?

A: This is where it gets really interesting! A lot of the time, when you just can't figure out what's causing your skin to react, it's actually something you have some control over. Some of the most common lifestyle triggers are smoking, dehydration and alcohol. You can also experience reactions to cosmetic ingredients like SD alcohol, artificial fragrances or lanolin, irritation from over-exfoliation, or even from what you eat! But since there are so many possible causes, nailing yours down can be tricky. The most practical approach is to track your skin's reactions over a period of a month or so, then look for themes.

Q: You also mentioned the environment as a potential cause of flare-ups. Can you tell us more about that?

A: Yes! This one is a bigger factor than many people realize. Pollution, airborne allergens, changing humidity levels and extreme hot or cold can all be triggers for skin sensitivity. But most of us aren't able to control our environment all day long – so what do you do? The first step is awareness: know when you're about to walk outside into an environment that'll trigger a flare-up. Dermalogica actually just released a tool that makes this really easy! Visit [skinsensitivityrisk.com](https://www.dermalogica.com/skinsensitivityrisk) to instantly see what factors might cause skin irritation today. Once you know your risk, you can take steps to protect your skin.

Q: Once we figure out what causes our flare-ups, what can we do with that information?

A: We've all heard the old adage that prevention is the best medicine, and that definitely applies here! It pays to avoid triggers whenever possible. But even when you can't, you can protect your skin to help keep it healthy. Specifically, look for products that hydrate, relieve symptoms like redness and irritation and help reinforce skin's barrier function – and use them before flare-ups happen to help keep your skin healthy.

Get more skin care tips at [dermalogica.com](https://www.dermalogica.com)