

be used. Occasionally, your dermatologist may recommend a specific corticosteroid or an anti-inflammatory cream for a short time to help your appearance while the antibiotics are working.

### **What can be expected with treatment?**

Most patients improve within two months. If corticosteroid creams have been used, there may be a flare-up when the creams are stopped. The flare-up is usually brief and not a reason to stop treatment. If antibiotic treatment is stopped too early, or if corticosteroid creams are used alone to control eruption, the problem can come back.

### **Can it be prevented?**

There is no guaranteed way to prevent perioral dermatitis. Avoiding the use of strong prescription fluorinated corticosteroid creams on the face is important. Your dermatologist may have suggestions about the use of moisturizers, cosmetics, and sunscreens and may advise against using toothpaste with fluoride, tartar control ingredients, or cinnamon flavoring.



AAD Web site: [www.aad.org](http://www.aad.org)  
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Revised 2000, 2003

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PAM44—09/03

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# Perioral Dermatitis



treatment  
prevention  
how long  
does it last  
bumps  
cause  
common skin problem

what dermatitis  
looks like



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## What is perioral dermatitis?

Perioral dermatitis is a common skin problem that affects young women and occasionally, men or children. "Perioral" refers to the area around the mouth, and "dermatitis" indicates a rash or irritation of the skin. The areas most affected by perioral dermatitis are the facial lines from the nose to the sides and borders of the lips, and the chin. The areas around the nose, eyes, and cheeks can also be affected. There are small red bumps, mild peeling, mild itching, and sometimes burning associated with perioral dermatitis. When the bumps are the most obvious feature, the disease can look like acne.



*Perioral dermatitis*

## How long does it last?

If not treated, perioral dermatitis may last for months to years. With treatment, the condition may recur several times, but usually the disorder does not return after successful treatment.

## What causes perioral dermatitis?

There are many theories about why this condition occurs. Dermatologists believe it is a form of rosacea or sunlight-worsened seborrheic dermatitis. Medicated creams

applied to the face can also cause perioral dermatitis. Once perioral dermatitis develops, corticosteroid creams seem to help, but the disorder reappears when treatment is stopped. In fact, perioral dermatitis usually comes back even worse than it was before the use of steroid creams. Some types of cosmetics, moisturizers, and dental products with fluoride may be partially responsible. Hormones, sunlight, and stress may aggravate the situation. The cause of this problem is not understood.



*Perioral dermatitis*

## Are laboratory tests needed to diagnose the problem?

Most of the time, no tests are necessary. A dermatologist can usually make an accurate diagnosis by just examining the skin. Sometimes, scraping or a biopsy of the skin is done. Occasionally, blood tests are ordered to eliminate other conditions that can look similar.

## How is this condition treated?

An oral antibiotic, like tetracycline, is the most common treatment for perioral dermatitis. Treatment may be needed for several months to prevent recurrence. For milder cases, topical antibiotic creams may