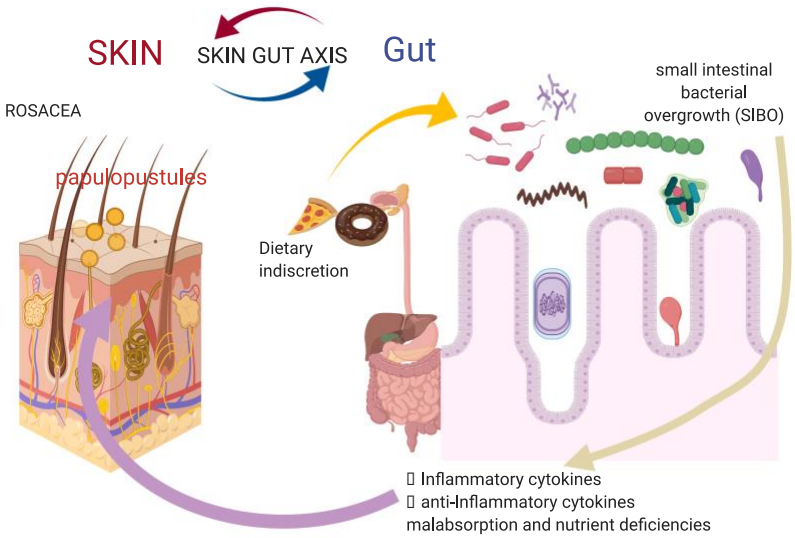
ROSACEA and the GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT



Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO) is a condition in which bacteria, customarily seen in abundance in the large intestine, are present in inappropriate and excessive quantities in the small intestine. The improper distribution of bacteria in the small intestines can lead to gastrointestinal symptoms, such as gas and bloating, and systemic symptoms affecting other parts of the body. SIBO related malabsorption of nutrients is one example of how this condition can lead to dysfunction in many organs.

A 2008 study demonstrated that papulopustular rosacea patients have a significantly higher small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO) prevalence than controls, and eradication of SIBO induces almost complete regression of the rosacea. Importantly, many patients with SIBO do not present with gastrointestinal complaints. Therefore, the consideration of SIBO as a cause of rosacea should not be excluded because of a lack of gastrointestinal symptoms.

The migrating motor complex (MMC) refers to the electromechanical activity of the gastrointestinal smooth muscle between meals. Fasting between meals results in activation of the migrating motor complex, which propels food in an appropriate and timely manner from the small intestine into the large intestine. Anything that interferes with the MMC results in slower transit time of food within the small intestine. The longer food is present in the small intestine, the greater the opportunity for bacteria to proliferate and cause bacterial overgrowth.

The MMC continues until the ingestion of food terminates it. Therefore, 4 to 5 hours between meals and a 12 hour fast overnight are crucial strategies for increasing the activity of the migrating motor complex and avoiding small intestinal bacterial overgrowth.

Anti-microbial therapies can be a useful adjunct in treating small intestinal bacterial overgrowth. Herbal treatments are at least as effective as the conventional and extremely expensive antibiotic rifaximin for the resolution of SIBO, as determined by a lactulose breath test. However, SIBO will usually recur if proper functioning of the migrating motor complex is not restored and maintained.

Additional factors playing a role in small intestinal bacterial overgrowth include ileocecal valve dysfunction, hypochlorhydria, unfortunate dietary choices, and inappropriate immune function.

References

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