

PSORIASIS : AN INFORMATION SHEET

Psoriasis is an inflammatory skin disorder, often running in families, which is thought to be linked to an abnormal immune response. New skin cells are produced at faster rate than dead skin cells are shed causing a build-up of excess cells which form thickened patches. A small percentage of people with psoriasis may develop a particular form of arthritis.

PLAQUE PSORIASIS

Patches of thickened, red, scaly skin usually on knees, elbows, lower back and scalp.

Intermittent itchiness/ soreness of affected areas

Discoloured nails with pitting.

GUTTATE PSORIASIS

Coin shaped pink patches of scaly skin, mainly on back and chest

Intermittent itchiness.

PUSTULAR PSORIASIS

Small fluid filled blisters on a red base, mainly on palms of hands and soles of feet

Gradual replacement of blisters by brown spots or small scaly patches

In severe episodes blisters develop quickly and may be accompanied by a fever. In these circumstances medical treatment should be sought urgently as dehydration, kidney failure and severe infection may develop.

INVERSE PSORIASIS

Large, clearly defined red areas in folds of skin. Often affects groin, armpits and skin under breasts. Mainly affects the elderly people.

TRIGGERS

- Excessive alcohol intake
- Prescribed drugs eg some antimalarials and rarely, beta blockers
- Food sensitivity
- Yeast infections such as Candida Albicans
- Injury
- Infection
- Stress/ anxiety

STRESS

Stress is an aggravating factor for some people so consider meditation and relaxation techniques. Meditating has been shown to be clinically effective for some people with psoriasis.

ALTERNATIVE/ COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENT

Psoriasis is a symptom which reflects an imbalance in an individual's system. **Homeopathic treatment** resolves the symptoms by addressing the underlying imbalance.

- Sunlight (ultraviolet light) is extremely beneficial
- Lanolin free Calendula (marigold) cream, chamomile ointment or aloe vera gel applied freely to affected areas.

DIET

- Clinical experience suggests some incidents of psoriasis may be connected to food sensitivity .Consider a food exclusion diet; excluding gluten containing foods such as wheat, barley and rye may result in some improvement for some people.
- Anti-candida diet : studies show a higher incidence of the yeast, candida albicans in the gut of people suffering from psoriasis. Problems in the gut, resulting in an overload of toxins, is often implicated in psoriasis.
- Psoriasis sufferers often have an overly acidic body chemistry and this impacts on the immune system and the gut's ability to absorb nutrients. Foods that help the body maintain a healthier , slightly alkaline state, are carrots, celery, spinach, sprouts, cooked apples, grapes, pineapple and prunes
- Limit consumption of alcohol, meat, sugar, animal fats. Increase intake of fibre and cold water fish.
- Essential fatty acids : Psoriasis sufferers sometimes have raised levels of arachidonic acid which is implicated in inflammatory processes. Arachidonic acid is derived from Omega 6 so avoid foods containing this (including many margarines, vegetable oils, processed foods and commercial baked goods) and avoid dairy products and red meat as these contain arachidonic acid.
- Supplement with Omega 3 oils, also commonly found in oily fish such as mackerel, sardines, salmon and nuts and seeds eg flaxseed (this oil is a good alternative for vegetarians as it contains 3x omega 3 to omega 6) and walnuts.
- 10g fish oil daily may help decrease itching and redness.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables contain antioxidants which help decrease inflammatory reactions.

HERBS

- Sarsaparilla; detoxifies the intestines and bowel and anti-inflammatory.
- Aloe vera; heals gut and promotes growth of healthy intestinal bacteria.
- Linseed and psyllium husks : detoxifying and soothing effect on bowel and are particularly helpful if constipation is a problem
- Berberine ; found in Oregon Root and Golden Seal inhibits formation of polyamines which are potentially toxic compounds that stimulate skin cells to divide at too fast a rate

Consult your GP or medical herbalist before taking any herbal remedy if you are on prescribed medication.

Consult a medical herbalist before taking any herbal remedy if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

LIVER SUPPORT

The liver is the most important organ of detoxification , filtering blood returning from the bowel. Raised levels of blood toxins from the intestine aggravate psoriasis.

Minimize consumption of alcohol which impairs liver function, damages lining of bowel and dilates skin capillaries, increasing cell production and inflammation.

Dandelion, Oregon graperoot, berberis, milk thistle, golden seal and artichoke leaves are herbs and plants which can support the liver but try only one at a time .

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NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

- Vit A and zinc are vital for healthy skin and decreased levels are found in people with psoriasis
- Vitamin C : consider extra supplementation as it is an anti inflammatory.
- Selenium : this mineral is often deficient in our diets and psoriasis sufferers have particularly low levels. Research suggests supplementation with 100-200mcg combined with 10mg Vit E may help reduce psoriasis symptoms.
- *Consult your doctor before using Vit E or fish oils/ omega 3 if you have been prescribed warfarin or aspirin as all these thin the blood.*

Nutritional supplement regime (as suggested in Encyclopaedia of Natural Medicine)

- High potency multi vitamin and mineral
- Flaxseed oil, 1tbs per day
- Vit A 50,000IU per day (not to be used by pregnant women or women at risk of pregnancy)
- Vit E 400IU per day
- Chromium 400mcg per day
- Selenium 200mcg per day
- Zinc 30mcg per day
- Water soluble fibre eg psyllium 5g at bedtime.

REFERENCES

Murray, M and Pizzorno, J. ' Encyclopaedia of Natural Medicine'

Clark, S. ' What Really Works'

Peters, D. 'New Medicine '