Psoriasis and Weight

by BRENDA VANTA

The Relationship between Psoriasis and Weight

Working out regularly not only helps you shed extra pounds, but can also improve your psoriasis. Wondering about this rather unusual connection between psoriasis and weight?

Research

Studies found that psoriasis sufferers tend to have weight troubles, being on average 7% heavier than those who don't have this condition. Being overweight or obese causes an increased inflammation in the body, which further promotes skin inflammation and aggravation of the skin lesions. Furthermore, this inflammation triggers a reaction from fat cells, and they start to increase in number, making your attempt to lose weight even harder.

On the other hand, exercise decreases the levels of the inflammation in your body in the long run. A randomized controlled study featured in the "Journal of Dermatology" further shows the benefits of exercise in improving psoriasis. The results: an anti-inflammatory diet and exercise (leading to weight loss) can significantly reduce psoriasis severity.

The intervention group ate three low-calorie meals and exercised three times weekly, while the control group simply attended some information session on weight loss. The participants who followed the diet and worked out experienced a 48% decrease in the median score of Psoriasis Area and Severity Index (or PASI), while this score dropped just by 25.5% in the control group.

The scientists also noted that the subjects who lost the most pounds experienced the larger improvement in psoriasis.

Why Being Overweight Aggravates Psoriasis

- One of the most important reasons losing weight is beneficial is the inflammation factor. Being overweight or obese means that there is an increased level of inflammation in your body, including your skin. Inflammation also increases the risk to develop heart diseases, diabetes, arthritis, some forms of cancer and other conditions.
- Some anti-psoriasis drugs- i.e. biologics appear to work better for those who have average weight compared with obese patients, according to Dr Goldenberg from Icahn School of Medicine, New York.
- Your skin lesions improve when you lose weight. A 2013 study featured in the JAMA Dermatology found that the participants who lost weight (an average 34 pounds over 16 weeks) experienced an improvement in psoriasis lesions compared with those who did not lose weight.

Next page: losing weight safely and efficiently.

Tips to Lose Weight Safely and Efficiently

In order to lose weight, you have to burn more calories than you consume. For example, you need to burn 3,500 calories to lose one pound.

With diet, you can lose one pound each week by cutting down 500 calories every day. If you add exercise, you can burn another few hundred calories each day.

Avoid extreme diets, as you will likely gain those pounds back, and more in a very short period of time.

1. **Avoid friction by choosing lose clothes, and keep your skin moist.** Before working out, apply petroleum jelly or other lubricants on the psoriasis lesions and areas that irritate easy - such as the groin or under the breasts. If you notice your skin gets irritated, apply a topical medication after your workout
2. **Be gentle with your skin when you shower.** Do not rub and scrub. Use soap or shower gel made with natural ingredients, free of artificial colors, fragrances or other ingredients.
3. **Get an individualized weight loss workout from a fitness expert or consider a combination of aerobic exercise and weight lifting.** Start slowly and gradually increase the intensity of your workouts to build endurance and strength, while burning fat.
4. **If you have arthritis, you should first deal with a flare-up and control the inflammation, than start to work out.** Exercise help control joint pain over time.
5. **Keep a diary.** The saying, “What gets measured can get managed (and improved),” can be used for your goal to lose weight. A diary can help you see how much you actually eat every day, and help you to avoid emotional eating. This is also helpful to note any food allergies and intolerances, as you may observe a link between eating certain foods and a flare-up.
6. **Do an allergy test.** It’s worth getting tested for foods allergies such as gluten, or dairies. Eating foods you are sensitive or allergic to can hinder your weight loss, and also aggravate your skin symptoms.

7. **Chew well, eat slowly.** It takes approximately *20 minutes* from the time *you* start *eating* for your *brain* to send out signals of fullness and satisfy your hunger. Eat when you are really hungry, and avoid eating when you are stressed or doing other activities like work, watching TV, talking on the phone, etc.)
8. **Plan ahead.** Make a plan in the morning (or the night before) about what you will eat each day. This way, you can make healthier choices. You can prepare the food, or chose wisely the menu at a restaurant. Don’t forget to eat in the morning, as people who skip breakfast tend to overeat later on in the day.
9. **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water to stay well hydrated. The sensation of thirst is often confused by your body with the sensation of hunger. If you feel hungry, have a glass or two of water and wait 20-30 minutes. If you still feel hungry, you likely need a snack or a meal. Limit your consumption of coffee and alcohol, as both dehydrate you.
10. **Eat well.** Avoid highly processed foods, which contain high amounts of fat, sugar and artificial additives that promote inflammation, are poor in nutrients and loaded with calories. Paprika and hot sauce also appear to aggravate psoriasis.
11. **Work out every day.** Go for a walk or do some jogging. Build some muscles with strength training (weights, or elastic bands) to help your body burn fat faster.