What Should and Shouldn’t Be Eaten When You Have Psoriasis?

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Psoriasis Diet: Better Food Choices to Manage Your Symptoms

With contributions from Lara W.

Psoriasis is a complicated and unpredictable disorder, as every patient knows very well. It’s an autoimmune condition, which means the problem starts deep under your skin, but what goes on in and around your body could certainly impact the severity of your symptoms, too.

You likely find that cold weather, dry air, and airborne irritants tend to inflame your skin, but how about what you eat? Your daily diet may not be able to completely break the cycle of itchy, patchy, scaly eruptions, but adding some healthy ingredients could relieve a good deal of discomfort and improve your quality of life.

The Link Between Food, Weight and Psoriasis

The medical community has turned their attention to diet and psoriasis for several years, but as of now, they haven’t found any link between psoriasis flares and any specific foods. What they do know is that the more extra weight you carry, the worse your symptoms will probably be.

The strongest evidence to support a link between diet and psoriasis centers on body mass index (BMI). Researchers have found that the higher your BMI (which translates to a higher number on the scale), the higher your chances of developing psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, and the worse your psoriasis symptoms will become.

It’s not that being overweight or obese necessarily leads to skin issues, but experts suspect that fat can interfere with other biological factors to cause psoriasis:

- **Gene mutations:** You may be more predisposed to psoriasis than you imagine, and if your genes make you more likely to develop the disorder, a higher weight could be the tipping point that sends your skin into a flare.
- **Cytokines:** Fat cells secrete proteins known as cytokines, and they spark inflammation in the body. Since psoriasis is an inflammatory disease, it follows that your symptoms will be milder if you have fewer cytokines.

Studies have found that patients who can get rid of extra pounds will see a quick improvement in their symptoms, but will also significantly lower their risk of related inflammatory disorders that can complicate health down the road.

When you live with psoriasis, your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and stroke are higher than average. Losing weight is the best way to get your blood pressure and cardiovascular health back to healthy levels.

The Facts on Gluten and Psoriasis

Gluten-free diets are certainly in vogue, and many people are getting on board for a variety of health-related reasons. But when it comes to gluten and psoriasis, the answer isn't so simple: it can be a good idea for some, but going gluten-free might not help you at all.

Having psoriasis doubles your chances of developing celiac disease, which is a severe intolerance to the gluten protein found in wheat, rye, and several other grains.

One study followed a group of people with psoriasis who also had celiac disease, and found that once gluten was eliminated from the diet, almost 75 percent of patients enjoyed a reduction in their psoriasis symptoms. On the other hand, psoriasis patients who did not also have celiac disease showed no improvement in their symptoms once they went gluten-free.

Since a gluten-free diet can rest on expensive substitutes, it's not a prudent choice if you haven't been diagnosed with celiac disease. However, the focus on natural, unrefined plants and lean proteins is one aspect of the gluten-free lifestyle that will certainly benefit anyone.

Next Page: What foods to eat with psoriasis.

What a Diet for Psoriasis Should Include

There are no exceptional ingredients for psoriasis relief, but there are groups of components to include in your skin-friendly menu that can bring results.

Try to add more of these inflammation-fighting, cell-boosting foods to your diet right away:

Vitamins A and D

It's important to get a wide range of vitamins and minerals to keep every system in your body functioning well, but vitamin A and vitamin D are extra important for skin health. Foods rich in vitamin A (think carrots, mango, and sweet potato) are also great for your eyes and will help to protect your cells.

As for vitamin D, it may be better to get your daily dose in the form of sunshine rather than supplements. Too much vitamin D can bring side effects by raising the calcium level in your blood, possibly leading to kidney stones or gout. Ten to fifteen minutes of sunlight should give your body the dose it needs.

Antioxidants

Antioxidants protect your cells against damaging free radicals, and that adds up to a reduced risk of cancer, heart disease, and other chronic, systemic diseases. They may not magically erase your psoriasis symptoms, but antioxidants will give your body the strength it needs to function well, and hopefully overcome the inflammation.

These protective compounds are found in all sorts of fresh fruit and veggies, but in general, aim for the brightly colored varieties for the biggest helping of antioxidants. Blueberries, currants, squash, leafy greens, tomatoes, carrots, black beans — the list is long, and the more variety you include, the wider the spectrum of nutrients you'll take in.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Out of all the nutritional supplements out there, experts have the most confidence in omega-3 fatty acids when it comes to psoriasis relief. These compounds target inflammation in the body while they improve cell function.

The anti-inflammatory power of omega-3s is remarkable, so there's good reason to swap out omega-6 fatty acid sources (like soybean oil, sunflower oil, and canola oil) for omega-3 fats (coconut oil, olive oil, and fatty cold water fish) in your daily menu. Add in a fish oil supplement for an even bigger omega-3 boost.

Nuts

Nuts are similar to fish in terms of providing excellent types of fats. These aren't the bad sorts of fat that we're taught to stay clear of. You wouldn't want to eat heaps of them, but in moderation, they can provide good fats to help with inflammation.

Brazil nuts especially seem to be good for people living with psoriasis, so adding a few of those to your diet may go a long way.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

You can't go wrong with eating plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. They contain an abundance of minerals and vitamins. They're easy for your body to process and don't have the same inflammatory properties of many other types of foods.

Also, fruits and vegetables are known to be great for your gut, which, as mentioned when discussing dairy, there may be a connection with people living with psoriasis.

If you increase the intake of fruits and especially vegetables into your diet, you may well notice an improvement in your psoriasis and your overall wellbeing.

Next page: what foods to avoid eating with psoriasis.

Foods to Avoid With Psoriasis

Foods that can be inflammatory are best to avoid, or at least limit your intake if you have psoriasis. This is because psoriasis is an inflammatory condition. You can choose to follow an anti-inflammatory diet, which would involve cutting out, or reducing the following:

Dairy Products

Although there's no solid evidence that dairy can really influence psoriasis, you may still want to give going dairy free a go just to see if it makes you feel better. There's a theory that there's a connection between gut health and psoriasis.

When people are diagnosed with gut issues, they can be warned to steer away from dairy products. If the connection between this and psoriasis is accurate, then there is the potential that avoiding dairy products, such as milk, butter, and cheese, could potentially speed up your skin's recovery.

You may feel you're able to reintroduce some dairy into your diet once your skin has cleared up. Give it a go if you, but re-introduce gradually.

Alcohol

Several skin conditions are thought to stem from alcohol consumption, so it wouldn't be entirely unlikely that having a level of alcohol in your diet may trigger, or worsen, your psoriasis flare-ups. I've personally tried removing alcohol from my diet when I get any indication that a flare-up is about to occur, and I do actually think it's helped me.

Drinking alcohol also causes a level of dehydration, and with psoriasis, staying hydrated is quite an essential thing. It's especially shown with the dryness of your skin, which is why it's always recommended that you frequently moisturize to keep your skin nice and hydrated.

Red Meat

It’s thought that the type of fat that’s in red meat can be a trigger for psoriasis. This is due to it having quite inflammatory elements. The acid is called arachidonic acid, which is something that can be found in people with psoriasis at a higher level than usual.

There are also discussions around the levels of iron found in red meat. It’s said that if there’s too high of a concentration of iron in your body, it may become pro-inflammatory, which isn’t good for psoriasis flare-ups.

The Bottom Line

At the end of the day, it’s all about trial and error when it comes to your body. What might work for someone else, may not work for you.

Since psoriasis has no specific treatment or cure, you just have to listen to your body a bit and see what it’s telling you. If you think some type of food is affecting you in a certain way, don’t hold research that says otherwise to heart, as there’s no solid scientific evidence around anything to do with psoriasis.

Just do what feels right for you, and remember the everything in moderation rule. Try to maintain a healthy and balanced diet and see if you can manage your psoriasis flare-ups with the types of vitamins, minerals, and oils you consume.