8 Healthy Habits for Living With Psoriasis

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Top 8 Things You Deal With When Living With Psoriasis

A diagnosis of psoriasis can be quite a scary thing, no matter your age. The concept of having a condition that can never truly be cured, only maintained, is frightening.

It comes with a lot of negative thoughts and connotations, but it also brings with it some not so terrible. Here's just a handful of things I have dealt with or come to terms with during my psoriasis journey.

You will also find tips on healthy living with psoriasis on the next page written by Patricia.

1. Unpredictability

You never really know when a psoriasis flare-up is around the corner.

Sometimes you might think you're bound to get a bit of an outbreak because you've had a stressful week at work. Other times you might feel like you've had a very low-stress week and there's no way your psoriasis could be triggered, but you still wake up with a flare-up, completely unexpected.

Considering it's so hard to pinpoint what causes psoriasis in different people, it's practically impossible to predict when your next flare-up could occur. One of my fears is that I'll get a flare-up right before an important event, like Christmas, or even a wedding!

2. Lots of Ointments

Another thing you have to deal with if you suffer from psoriasis is the probability that over time your skin will get used to certain ointments, and you'll have to mix and match to get the right ointment for the right time.

For a long time, I was using one type of ointment to treat my psoriasis, and it worked wonders. But then one day, all of a sudden, my psoriasis stopped responding to it.

From then on it's been a bit of a mix-and-match operation to try and get the right ointment for whatever type of flare-up I'm experiencing. Sometimes it's easy, other times it takes a few goes to get the right combination working.

3. Washing Your Hair All the Time

This one may not be relevant to everyone. I experience plenty of flares in my hairline, on my back, and around my neck.

When I'm applying the ointments to the affected areas, I'm often making the hair that touches these spots

greasy. Then this results in a lot of hair washing to keep my hair fresh and healthy looking.

However, the other downside is not being able to use the pretty shampoos and having to use treatment shampoos instead. They don't always leave your hair feeling nice for very long, so you end up washing your hair twice as often. It can get quite tedious.

4. Monitoring How Much Time You Spend in the Sun

It's a bit of a tricky one this one.

On one hand, vitamin D is supposed to be great for psoriasis, so getting out in the sunshine can be a great idea. But on the other hand, some of the ointments you use to treat psoriasis don't react well in the sun, so often you're advised to stay covered when topical lotions are applied.

You've got to carefully monitor how much time you're out in the sun, and don't even think about getting sunburnt as that's believed to be a terrible psoriasis trigger. And from my experience, this trigger concept is accurate for my skin at least.

I always make sure to have plenty of sunscreen, a hat, and clothes to cover up with. I do try to find as much shade as possible when we're out and about.

5. Hearing People's Reactions

One of my least favorite parts of this psoriasis journey is listening to the way people react when they see me with a flare-up. Sometimes you do get the occasional comment that alludes to people thinking they'll catch something.

Other times people just completely ignore it, and then you get the people who get concerned.

I'm not good at explaining my psoriasis, so I tend to sort of play it off as if it's nothing when inside I'm stressing and panicking about it. It's one of the things about this whole thing that I just don't think I'll get used to.

6. Being Forced to Relax

I have a Fitbit that I use to monitor my steps closely. It also gives me an indication of my heart rate. I know for a fact that during times of my life when my heart rate is consistently above 90bpm, I have some psoriasis flare-up, whether it's just a little one or a full-on attack.

I've started to learn that at times like these I do need to take a step back and relax. I can't do everything, even though I'd love to be able to. It's essential to take some time out to watch a TV show or read a book, or get out in nature and go for a walk. Taking time out for yourself is vital.

7. Finding Support Networks

It's very easy to isolate yourself when you find out you have psoriasis. When I realized it's what I had, I'd never heard of it before, and I thought I was in this whole thing alone. But it didn't take long to realize this wasn't the case.

After doing a bit of research, I found a few Facebook groups that connected people going through the same thing, and when I shared my first blog post about my experience, several of my friends commented saying they also suffered from psoriasis. It turns out it's a very small world, and psoriasis is far more prevalent than we think.

This makes it so much easier to find the support from people we don't even necessarily know to help us through tricky experiences and to find potential treatments we wouldn't have thought of before.

8. Enjoying the Times When You Don't Have a Flare-Up

Last but not least is enjoying the times when your skin is calm.

For me, the times between serious flare-ups can be anywhere from three months, six months or a year, and I appreciate them. I may get the odd spot here and there, but nothing compares to the takeover I get now and then.

I'm always grateful when I get through a holiday without having to deal with a flare-up, or when I make it through a particularly stressful experience, and I come out the other end pretty much psoriasis free. Having "normal" skin is something that so many people take for granted, and I love feeling like that in-between flare-ups, too.

Next page: eight better living with psoriasis tips.

8 Tips for Living With Psoriasis

Developing healthy lifestyle habits can help you to minimize the number and severity of your psoriasis flare-ups. You should consult with your healthcare provider for specific, individualized advice, but are some habits you can adopt that work well for most people with psoriasis.

1. Keep a Diary

Document the condition of your skin in a diary. Note when it improves and when you have flare-ups of symptoms. Write down what you eat, stressors, activities and fluid intake, and make note of your general level of wellbeing.

The purpose of the dairy is to help you identify patterns. By keeping a diary, you may discover what makes your psoriasis flare-up and what makes it improve. By identifying irritants, you will be able to avoid them. A diary is a great tool for evaluating the effectiveness of treatment.

2. Eat Well

What you put into your body provides you with the basic materials your skin cells need to be healthy. If you feed your body with healthy foods, your skin and overall health will improve. Don't put harmful or irritating foods into your body as they can contribute to flare-ups, itchiness and poor healing of inflamed tissues.

Foods rich in essential fatty oils improve your skin's elasticity, reduce inflammation and relieve itchiness.

Eat fresh, cold, deep-water, wild-caught fish several times weekly, as this is a wonderful source of essential fatty oils. Mackerel, herring, sardines and salmon are excellent choices. Do not eat farm raised fish as it does not provide the same benefits.

Vegetarian sources of healthy essential fatty oils include hemp and flax seeds. Buy the hulled variety of hempseeds as they are easier to use. Store flax and hemp seeds in the refrigerator or freezer so that they will stay fresh, and grind flax seeds immediately before using them.

Simple, fresh, easily prepared fruits, vegetables, and whole grains should make up the main part of your diet. Fruits and vegetables are rich sources of phytochemicals, support the growth and sustenance of healthy skin cells. Compounds in fresh fruits and vegetables slow down the aging process, relieve inflammation, and prevent skin infections.

Avoid packaged or prepared foods. They often contain additives, preservative, dyes, and other unnatural compounds which have been proven to cause flare-ups of psoriasis symptoms. Limit your intake of fried, fatty foods, and foods that contain large amounts of sugars and artificial sweeteners.

3. Stay Hydrated

Your skin is the largest detoxifying organ that your body has. Drink plenty of fluids so that it can eliminate toxins well. Drinking plenty of fluids keeps your skin supple and prevents cracking from occurring. Cracked skin is not only uncomfortable and unattractive; it provides a route for bacteria and other microorganisms to enter your system.

The best liquid that you can drink is plain water, but burdock, dandelion root, kudzu, chickweed and chamomile teas are soothing. Lemon balm, mint, and oat straw calm the nerves and can help to reduce itchiness and irritability. They support your body's natural detoxification process.

Coffee and alcoholic beverages are dehydrating. Limit or avoid their intake.

4. Consider Getting Tested for Allergies

Many people who have psoriasis suffer from allergies. Ask your health care provider about the benefits of allergy testing. Allergy testing may be provided by several means. Blood and skin tests are the most commonly used skin tests. Wheat, dairy, MSG, and food dyes are common allergens among people who have psoriasis.

5. Reduce Stress

Psoriasis often flares up during and after times of stress. Take a look at your life.

- Are there steps you can take to avoid or minimize stressors?
- Do you need to delegate tasks to other family members or co-workers?
- Are you getting enough sleep?
- Do you get enough exercise?
- Are you over-committed?
- Do you need to learn how to be better organized?
- How are your time management skills?
- Do you have a healthy support group of friends?
- Do you spend time in nature?

Taking time to nourish your mind, body, and spirit will not only decrease the occurrences of skin problems, you will enjoy a higher quality of life. You may even live longer.

6. Protect Your Skin From the Outside

Avoid excessive exposure to sun and wind. During periods of extremely hot or cold weather, you may find that your skin flares up. Try to limit your time outdoors when the weather is extreme.

Use hypoallergenic skin care products. Consider learning how to may your own bath and facial products. They are easy to make and you can enjoy high-end products at a much lower cost than if you were to purchase them. Include natural essential oils and herbs that support healthy skin in your blends. Rose, lavender, chamomile, and calendula are often beneficial for people who suffer from psoriasis.

Use a soft cloth or wash with your hands when bathing. Avoid the use of brushes and coarse bathing implements. Bathe in warm or cold water, not hot. Coarse bathing materials and hot water increase itchiness and inflammation.

7. Take Hypoallergenic, High-Quality Natural Supplements

Purchase and take a hypoallergenic stress formula multivitamin/multimineral supplement daily. These supplements provide your body with micronutrients it needs to function optimally.

Take fish, flax, borage, black currant, or evening primrose oil daily. They contain concentrated amounts of the essential fatty acids that help your skin and entire body to function well.

8. See Your Health Care Provider Regularly

In addition to getting the best treatment possible for your skin, it is important that you see your healthcare provider regularly so that you can be professionally monitored for signs of psoriatic arthritis.

You do not have to be diagnosed with severe psoriasis to have an increased chance of developing psoriatic arthritis. Early diagnosis and treatment of psoriatic arthritis lead to better outcomes, so notify your healthcare provider right away if you experience swelling, pain or decreased movement in a joint.

Live Well With Psoriasis

By being active, and enjoying a healthy lifestyle, you will reap greater rewards than simply improving the health of your skin. You will be more comfortable, stay well, and look better. Your immune system will work better.

It is possible to turn your diagnosis of psoriasis into a positive lifestyle change which benefits your entire body and spirit. Start living better today by implementing a few of the actions discussed here.