7 Tips for Exercising Without Causing a Psoriasis Flare-Up

by PATRICIA BRATIANU

How to Manage Psoriasis and Exercise Safely

Exercise aids weight management, reduces inflammation, relieves stress and improves heart health — these are well-known truths. However, many people who have psoriasis are often unclear if exercise helps or makes their condition worse.

How Exercise Benefits People With Psoriasis

If simple measures are implemented, exercise can relieve symptoms, improve the effectiveness of treatments, decrease stress and help you maintain a healthy weight.

Exercise also:

- Aids circulation and can help medications used to treat psoriasis work better.
- Decreases flare-ups by relieving stress.
- Relieves discomfort due to psoriatic arthritis.
- Supports the body's own natural detoxification processes.
- Promotes the production of endorphins, which increase your mood and relieve pain.

Problems arise when exercise is done without taking precautions to relieve the physical stress on the body. For example, if you wear clothing that does not allow the free flow of air to your skin, lesions may become irritated and flare up.

Weight Management Improves Psoriasis Symptoms

One of the most important reasons to control your weight is that being overweight contributes to inflammation, and as a result, flare-ups. Keeping inflammation under control will not only relieve psoriasis, it will keep your entire body healthy.

Managing a healthy weight will also decrease your risks of developing diabetes, breathing problems and cardiovascular illnesses.

Exercise, Weight Management and Circulation

When you are diagnosed with psoriasis, you may have an increased risk of heart disease, so exercise is especially important. The anti-inflammatory effects of exercise help reduce risks of heart and blood vessel conditions, including blood clots, stroke and heart attack.

You can also improve circulation throughout your body from regular exercise. As a result of this, medications prescribed to treat your psoriasis may be more effective.

Healthy circulation also aids detoxification, as your body removes irritating wastes more effectively when your circulation is robust. It also supports the function of your skin, kidneys, digestive tract, and liver — all of which contribute to healthy detoxification.

Embarrassment Leads to Poorer Health

Unfortunately, many individuals who have psoriasis are sensitive about their appearance. They tend to withdraw socially and limit their involvement in healthy activities. Some people who have psoriasis feel isolated.

As a result, they may become sedentary, depressed and overweight. They may indulge in unhealthy habits, such as consuming too much alcohol. All of these actions diminish quality of life and contribute to flare-ups. If any of these characteristics sound familiar, it is time to reclaim your health and life. You can do it!

Many people who have psoriasis also don't get enough exercise because they are reluctant to be seen in gym clothes or swimsuits due to their lesions. If you are embarrassed about your lesions, choose activities that do not require wearing shorts, tank tops or swimsuits, exercise at home, or purchase lightweight clothing created from breathable fabrics.

Once you get out there and reap the benefits of exercise, you may decide to overcome your fear of showing your lesions and simply enjoy your workout.

7 Precautions to Take While Exercising With Psoriasis

While exercise clearly provides benefits for psoriasis sufferers, there are some simple precautions you must take in order to prevent flare-ups and injuries. By implementing preventative strategies you will get the maximum benefits from your workout and enjoy the activity more.

Choose exercises that are appropriate for your current level of fitness, and consider the following before beginning:

- If you have not exercised in a while, meet with your health care provider prior to beginning an exercise program. Begin slowly and concentrate on activities that gently stretch and build strength.
- Avoid activities that jar your joints. It is important that you take steps to minimize the risk of injury as your psoriasis may flare-up if you are hurt.
- The most important kind of exercise to engage in is one you enjoy, since you will be more likely to stick with it.
- Choose activities that give your entire body a workout and select exercises that enhance flexibility and strength.
- Make sure your exercise program has an aerobic component to get your heart pumping.
- Choose exercise clothes carefully. Wear loose clothing that is created from fabric that allows free flow of air or traps perspiration away from your skin. Avoid clothing and activities that can irritate your skin.
- Apply a moisturizing barrier salve, or a light dusting of cornstarch to areas that perspire heavily and are subject to friction before you exercise.

Engage in Healthy Exercise Practices

Heed the signals your body gives you while you are exercising. This is particularly important if you have psoriatic arthritis.

While exercise is healthy, you must respect your body's innate knowledge about when modifications need to be made. Do not push through the pain. Pain is a signal that you need to back off.

Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exercising. Staying hydrated will enhance your energy level and support your skin's ability to rid itself of toxins. Well-hydrated skin is less subject to injury than dry skin.

Many people who have psoriasis have an increase in symptoms when their skin is exposed to extreme climates. Cold and dry conditions are usually the most detrimental. Choose indoor activities or ones that do not expose you to temperature and moisture extremes.

Ensure Your Skin’s Health After You Exercise

Examine your skin after exercising for signs of irritation — flare-ups are more likely to arise in areas where the skin is irritated or sweaty. You may need to modify activities or purchase different clothing if irritation occurs. If friction occurs, apply topical medications promptly.

Shower immediately after your workout. Avoid the use of coarse bath tools, such as rough washcloths, brushes or loofahs. Use natural, fragrance-free, hypoallergenic products containing few ingredients for hair and skin care after your workout. Apply moisturizers liberally.

Psoriasis and Exercise: The Bottom Line

Exercise clearly offers benefits for individuals with psoriasis. By implementing simple strategies, both your skin and overall wellness can improve.

Don’t let your psoriasis stand in the way between you and health. You owe it to yourself to get moving and decrease your risk of flare-ups.