What Causes Psoriasis Burning and Pain?

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Explaining Your Painful Symptoms and How to Find Relief

There are several different types of psoriasis and they can each bring a different set of discomforts. Sometimes, the itch is pervasive and widespread, and it's enough to drive you crazy. Other people have pustules that look worse than they feel, while others suffer from deeper pain that's nearly impossible to see. One thing they have in common is a stubborn, irritating presence that defies simple treatment.

Although itch tends to be the most common complaint among psoriasis sufferers, it doesn't always manifest as you might expect. Some people experience a really deep itch — one that no amount of scratching will relieve — while others describe the discomfort as pins and needles, painful pinching, or even burning.

In many cases, the nerve response is to blame, but painful burning could point to something else. Find out what may be behind your psoriasis symptoms in order to re-focus your treatment approach and find some quick relief.

What Causes the Burning Sensation?

Some people with skin psoriasis also contract psoriatic arthritis in the joints, especially the fingers, leaving them red, puffy and sometimes warm to the touch. In these cases, a deep burning could stem from the inflammation.

When the burning is clearly in your skin rather than your joints, it is likely related to the nerve response in this layer of tissue. These burning sensations could call for slightly different treatment than you might use for itch.

How to Modify Your Approach

If the burning is worse than the itching, you probably won't find relief in a warm shower, hot compress, or lotion with capsaicin (the active ingredient in chili peppers that's used to relieve itch and inflammation). Instead, you might want to try a cooling pack, or switch to a gentle moisturizing cream you keep in the fridge for a cooling affect when you slather it on your skin.

When to See a Doctor

When the burning comes with redness, heat, pus or swelling, you could have an infection. This is especially likely if the plaque has cracked or your scratching has broken the skin around the affected area.

If your burning brings these other symptoms, comes on unexpectedly, or worsens over the course of a day, see your doctor as soon as possible to get the antibiotics you need to clear up the problem.

How to Manage the Pain

Psoriasis pain can stem from a few different sources. Psoriatic arthritis brings pain and swelling to joints — you'll

probably notice the tenderness more when you apply any pressure to the spot — and severe plaque outbreaks can trigger nerve endings in a number of uncomfortable ways. But there are also things you could (or shouldn't) be doing to diminish your pain.

Next page: ways to effectively manage your psoriasis burning and pain

How to Manage the Pain

Manage the Itching

Wouldn't it be wonderful to get rid of the itch with one simple remedy? Unfortunately, that's just not the case for many psoriasis sufferers, and instead they must use trial and error (and an open mind) to find a combination that works reasonably well. Luckily, there are plenty of remedies to try before you painfully scratch through your skin.

De-Stress

Stress interferes with your immune system, which means a rising stress level can easily trigger a psoriasis flare or aggravate your itch. If you're in a particularly stressful period, put aside more time to relax and also to exercise.

Both are extraordinarily helpful when it comes to chasing away worries and refocusing your mind. If regular exercise and meditation don't work, it's time to seek some outside help to bring your stress back to a reasonable level as soon as possible.

Moisturize

First and foremost, keep your skin moist all day long. A heavy, simple (fragrance-free) cream can do the trick, or try rubbing a spoonful of olive oil or coconut oil for psoriasis into your dry areas.

If you need something more heavy duty, see your doctor about a prescription steroid cream or something with salicylic acid. But be careful: stronger ingredients might relieve itch, but they can also make pain worse.

Prevent Cracks

Dryness leads to cracking, cracking leads to pain, and severe cracking can lead to infection of the exposed tissue. Once an infection sets in, you can bet your pain and discomfort will get a lot worse. So, while it's easier said than done, you should do everything in your power to protect your plaques from cracking in the first place.

Although moisturizing creams and lotions can be good for psoriasis plaques and itchy scales, most varieties are not suited for cracked skin — they'll probably bring more irritation than relief. See your doctor about a prescription for a greasy ointment instead; the thicker the layer that stays on top of your plaques, the better protected your body will be.

Try Acupuncture

Although there isn't much hard evidence that acupuncture can relieve autoimmune disorders, it has been shown to help with pain. A 2012 study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* found acupuncture to be effective at treating chronic pain, so there's a chance it can help with your psoriasis pain, too.

Considering this ancient practice has also been used to reduce stress — a major psoriasis trigger — it could also help to fight your symptoms at the source.

Pain isn't always easy to deal with, and since everyone experiences it a bit differently, it can be difficult to describe. Try to make some detailed notes as soon as your psoriasis flares up, so you can better describe the sensation and the progression to your doctor. Although psoriasis can take many forms, there could be another

issue at play as well, especially if you notice new or worsening symptoms.