Psoriatic Arthritis: Caring for Your Hands and Feet

by PATRICIA BRATIANU

Managing Psoriasis Swelling

Psoriatic arthritis can make your hands, fingers, feet and toes become painful and swollen. Let’s take a look at what you can do to prevent and treat swelling and pain.

The earlier you implement preventative measures, the less likely it is you will experience pain and swelling.

Balance Exercise With Rest

Engaging in a regular exercise program benefits your entire body, including your hands and feet. Exercise elevates the level of circulating endorphins, which are natural pain killers and mood-boosters, throughout your body. However, it is important you balance exercise with rest.

Your circulation will also improve if you participate in a regular exercise program. Your feet are particularly subject to swelling simply due to gravity. Improved circulation of blood and lymphatic fluid throughout your body relieves pain and inflammation of all of the tissues of your body.

Consult with your health care provider for recommendations. Ask them about guidelines for exercising during periods of inflammation and pain. You may benefit from a consultation with a physical therapist as well. If not, check with a professional trainer who has expertise working with individuals who suffer from arthritic and joint disorders.

The Best Exercises Improve Overall Wellness

Participate in exercises that do not stress your joints. Unless you are actively experiencing swelling and pain in your feet, walking is an excellent exercise for you to do every day. Be sure to wear comfortable footwear to absorb jarring movements and protect your feet.

Riding a regular or stationary bicycle is an excellent exercise option too. Bicycling is one of the best exercises you can perform in order to improve flexibility and circulation of your hands and feet, and can be less jarring than walking.

Yoga and tai chi offer fantastic benefits for your mind, body and spirit. An experienced practitioner can teach you breathing and relaxation techniques that will help you cope with pain and the stress of living with a chronic condition. Find an instructor who can teach you special hand movements to improve flexibility and relieve discomfort in your hands.

Swimming or simply flexing and relaxing in warm water can decrease pain and soothe stiff joints as well.

Use Hot and Cold to Minimize Swelling and Discomfort

Consult with a physical therapist or experiment with the application of heat and cold to your hands and feet. If heat makes your hands, fingers, feet and toes feel better, consider going for paraffin treatments or purchase a unit for home use. Only use hot and cold therapies if you have normal sensation in your hands and feet.

Mind-Body Therapies Are Powerful Allies

Mind-body therapies can help you to manage pain, improve your outlook, and sleep better. All of these attributes can make living with psoriatic arthritis less challenging.

A wide array of techniques are useful, including progressive muscle relaxation exercises, which help decrease tension in the tissues surrounding your joints, resulting in less pain. It is a simple technique you can perform anywhere.

Guided imagery can help you visualize ways to change the intensity, location, and quality of your pain. While it is best to work with a skilled practitioner, you can learn guided imagery at home.

Mediation is the most comprehensive mind-body tool you can utilize to decrease pain. Mediation has been practiced for thousands of years, and modern research supports its effectiveness for reducing pain and healing.

Medication Prevents and Treats Pain and Inflammation of Your Hands and Feet

Check with your health care provider regarding available medications to prevent and relieve pain and swelling.

If you take prescription medications, ask your pharmacist to put your prescriptions in easy-to-open containers that won’t stress your hands and fingers. Over-the-counter and prescription nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can be highly effective as well.

Topical remedies containing capsaicin or menthol can provide rapid relief, but require repeated applications to work optimally. Capsaicin-based products are available from herbalists and in pharmacies. Menthol-based products provide quick, temporary relief. Try different brands to see which are most effective for you.

Depending upon the extent of the psoriatic arthritis and any other health issues you may have, other medications may be prescribed to reduce inflammation and pain systemically. Some of these help reduce the sensitivity of the nerves to pain signals.

They are particularly helpful for discomfort of the hands and feet. If you suffer from a psoriasis burning sensation or tingling, these medications will reduce those sensations as well. In addition, antidepressant medications are used to relieve pain. They can also help relieve mood disorders you may suffer from because you live with a chronic pain condition.