Psoriasis’s Effect on the Skin

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

The Toll Psoriasis Takes on the Skin

The type, location and degree of psoriasis that you are living with are a few of the factors that determine the extent of complications and impact it can have on your skin. So what psoriasis effect on the skin can happen?

Being plagued with psoriasis can extend beyond skin health. Those with psoriasis are at a higher risk of developing metabolic syndrome, inflammatory bowel disease, cardiovascular disease and potentially cancer, according to some mixed evidence. The aforementioned conditions are not to be taken lightly. Working to manage psoriasis in both the physical and mental aspects of management is instrumental in lowering your risk.

To better understand the relation between psoriasis and these health conditions it will be helpful to look directly has how psoriasis impacts the skin and the hypothesized causes. Looking at the etiology of psoriasis may provide further insight into why this condition is impacting the skin in this way.

Development of Psoriasis

No one has identified a specific cause of psoriasis, but a genetic and immune link has been supported in the literature. First, genetic susceptibility places one at a higher risk of developing psoriasis. The immune factor comes into play because genetic weakness causes heightened immune sensitivity to our environment.

White blood cells (WBC) are at the center of your immunity. One very important type of WBC is a T lymphocyte/T cell. These are our “fighter” cells defending against foreign substances such as bacteria or viruses. When you have psoriasis the T cells turn on you, not serving as a protective mechanism, and they inadvertently attack healthy skin cells. The heightened activity of the T cells has a cascade effect impacting blood vessels of the skin and upregulating WBC to the outer skin layer.

This is why you see an ongoing cycle of skin cell production with your condition. Because of this rapid skin cell growth, followed by death, they begin to build up in a thick scaly layer on the skin’s surface as the WBC can’t keep up with the natural sloughing process.

One interesting note on the issue of genetics and psoriasis is that scientists believe that 10 percent of the population inherits this genetic disposition to psoriasis, however, only 2 to 3 percent will develop this disease.[1] What may trigger this gene expression is not clear, though some younger individuals report the onset of psoriasis following an infection such as strep throat.

Affecting the Skin

Flare-ups are events that can traumatize the skin as the buildup adds painful layers to the surface of the skin that is especially inflamed and scaly. Over time there are a few known changes in the skin you can expect. According to the Mayo Clinic[2] these include thickened skin and recurring bacterial skin infections brought on by trying to

relieve itchy patches by scratching. Additionally, a form of psoriasis called pustular psoriasis can become severe if the body encounters fluid and electrolyte imbalances.

The Mayo Clinic[3] has a graphic that demonstrates the differences between that of normal skin and psoriasis from the keratin to subcutaneous layer. What you'll notice is the primary difference lies in the keratin layer. As previously noted, the rapid acceleration of skin cell production results in a buildup of dead, flaky layers of skin.