Preventing Skin Injuries with Psoriasis

by ANGELA FINLAY

Little Steps to Protect Against Big Discomfort

It’s rare to avoid every skin irritant out there, especially when warm weather hits. From bug bites to allergies, something’s bound to bother you if you spend any amount of time outdoors. Unfortunately, psoriasis sufferers have more to be concerned about than itch or sensitivity, since a mild skin trauma can lead to a more serious condition called the Koebner phenomenon. Let's look at preventing skin injuries with psoriasis.

Good prevention is the key to better skin, especially when you’re experiencing a psoriasis outbreak. Learn how little triggers can affect your skin, plus some proven ways to protect and treat common skin injuries before they turn into something worse.

Understanding the Koebner Phenomenon

The Koebner phenomenon strikes when the dermis, or the layer of skin right below the surface, is damaged. A small scratch probably won’t do anything, but a bite or deeper cut can lead to psoriasis plaques forming at the site, and those can be long-lasting or permanent.

Up to 50% of psoriasis patients will experience the Koebner phenomenon at some point, but some extra attention to triggers can help you avoid it altogether. Try to avoid common indoor and outdoor irritants, like:

- **Sun burns and other types of burns:** Sun block is crucial, but also be careful around other potential hazards, like chemicals and hot kitchen elements. What begins as a small burn can cause more pain and damage than you expect, especially on the site of an existing psoriasis plaque.
- **Poison ivy:** Irritating plants are uncomfortable at the best of times but can lead to serious complications in psoriasis patients since scratching or rubbing the affected site can bring on the Koebner phenomenon or even infection.
- **Bug bites:** If you’re prone to bug bites, you may need to adjust your routine. Stay indoors at active bug times (dawn and dusk), avoid the woods, and wear long, light-colored clothing to protect your skin. Be extra vigilant during flare-ups.
- **Scrapes and splinters:** Again, long pants and long sleeves are easy ways to avoid everyday scrapes and cuts. You may want to use some “preventative” bandages if you’re preparing for a hike or doing some yard work. For an active day, place bandages on pressure points that tend to invite blisters and cracked skin.

Of course, avoiding triggers is easier said than done. Even with bug spray, sunblock and very careful stepping, you can’t protect against every outdoor danger. When you do experience irritation, you must treat it quickly and efficiently to prevent infection or chronic plaques from forming.

Tips for Treating Skin Injuries

With skin injuries, the lighter the treatment, the better. You don’t want to make the irritation worse, so clean the affected areas gently and pat dry. Bandaging the cut or sore spot can help prevent you from hitting, catching or further irritating it, but be careful not to use anything too sticky over the site – that will likely cause some trouble when you’re ready to remove it from your sensitive skin.