5 Ways to Treat Palmoplantar Psoriasis

by LARA WYATT

Psoriasis on Feet

Psoriasis is known as the skin condition that causes inflammation on regularly visible parts of the body, but it also manifests on areas of the body that are less visible, like feet. Psoriasis on the feet is referred to as palmoplantar psoriasis (plantar referring to the feet). It often appears on the soles of the feet, but it can also appear on the top of the feet. It can present itself in many different ways including, cracked skin, red and thick inflammation, scaling, swelling, and blisters.

How Common is It?

Palmoplantar psoriasis is not as common as other types of psoriasis; there is an estimated 3% to 4% of those who suffer from palmoplantar psoriasis.

How is It Diagnosed?

Doctors diagnose palmoplantar psoriasis based on what it looks like. Generally, the features of cracked skin, inflammation, and blistering or pustules indicate whether someone is suffering from psoriasis of the feet. Doctors will also note any other conditions a patient is dealing with, and these conditions can play a role in confirming whether the inflammation on the feet is in fact psoriasis. Occasionally, a skin biopsy or scrapings of the skin may be taken to be tested to see if it is psoriasis or perhaps a type of infection.

Those who are diagnosed with palmoplantar psoriasis are more susceptible to developing other medical conditions in the future. These conditions can include but aren't limited to depression, osteoporosis, Crohn's disease, psoriatic arthritis, and type 2 diabetes.

What Causes Psoriasis on the Feet?

Although there is not a set-in-stone cause for psoriasis, there are various different potential causes of psoriasis of the feet. It's an autoimmune condition, which leads to the immune system attacking healthy skin cells incorrectly. It reproduces skin cells rapidly, causes overproduction and build-up (hence the flaking, blistering skin). Things that can trigger your immune system to act in this way can include having an unhealthy diet and making unhealthy lifestyle choices; smoking and being stressed can cause psoriasis to appear.

Since our feet are often exposed to different environmental factors, like chemicals or natural materials, there is a connection between this exposure and psoriasis on the feet. Carrying out tasks like housework or farm work can increase the risk of suffering from psoriasis of the feet.

How is It Treated?

As with all other types of psoriasis, there are many different ways to treat palmoplantar psoriasis, and they can range from medicines and ointments to lifestyle changes.

1. Diet and Lifestyle Changes

Changing your diet and consuming minimal alcohol can help reduce psoriasis flare-ups, just as it is important to avoid consuming any alcohol when you're in the middle of a flare-up. Incorporating exercise into your daily routine can help reduce the likelihood of inflammation manifesting in your body, which suggests it could help reduce the effects of psoriasis. Consider higher-intensity exercise, like going for a jog or climbing hills three or four days per week.

2. Apply Topical Ointments

Topical medicinal ointments can also be used to treat a flare-up when they happen. It's important to be patient as the results may take several weeks. Stressing over a lack of results can cause psoriasis to flare-up worse, so treat yourself kindly.

The types of topical medications to consider include coal tar creams and ointments. These can help reduce the redness of the skin and reduce any pain or itch you may be suffering from. Salicylic acid can help to reduce any thickened skin or peeling. Corticosteroid creams can help reduce inflammation and can target the specific skin cells causing the problem. Your doctor can help you find the right solution or combination of products to ensure you are treating the psoriasis on your feet in an effective way.

3. Make Sure You're Getting Enough Vitamin D

Vitamin D is also great for psoriasis in the right dosage. If you spend some time out in the sun (responsibly), the sunlight can help reduce the impact of psoriasis on the feet. Be sure to check that any ointments you are currently using can be exposed to sunlight — some treatments require you to keep treated skin away from light exposure to avoid damaging the skin.

4. Oral Retinoids

For types of psoriasis that may need more aggressive treatment, speak to your doctor about looking into oral retinoids (vitamin A) as these are known to be well-suited to treating psoriasis of the hands and feet especially. It is thought to slow down the overproduction of skin cells and help restore the skin to its usual appearance. It can produce results from two weeks to a few months.

5. Biologics

Biologics are also an option to consider. They're referred to as targeted therapies that can help reduce inflammation in autoimmune conditions specifically. There are many types to consider, so it is important to work with your doctor to find the right one for you, should it be recommended.

Talk to Your Doctor

Before you use any medications, be sure to consult your doctor to find the right solution for you. They will be able to find a solution that will not clash with any other medications you may be taking and will suit your specific lifestyle.