Showering With Psoriasis

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How to Stay Clean and Refreshed Without Irritation

Psoriasis can complicate daily hygiene, but that doesn't mean you have to give up bathing and showering. The problem is that heat, water and friction can all irritate your already sensitive skin, so the better you can control those variables, the more comfortable you will be. Find out how your shower habits can bring relief from the pain and itch of psoriasis instead of aggravating your symptoms.

Tips for a Better Shower

As simple as it seems, a shower has the power to help or hinder your psoriasis. Attention to detail is important – learn how to optimize your time in the shower to stay clean, comfortable and healthy:

- **Switch to low flow.** Stiff pressure from a powerful showerhead can sting, so turn the setting to mist or low flow. If you can, switch your showerhead to a "rain shower" version, which simply uses gravity and a large surface area for a good soaking.
- **Stay cool.** Hot water is irritating and can further dry out psoriasis patches, but cool water can bring some relief. If your psoriasis is flaring up, you may want to take a quick cold shower, which can actually numb the itch for a little while.
- **Don't rub too hard.** If you have psoriasis patches on your scalp, gently massage the shampoo into your hair instead of rubbing fiercely. Slight pressure can help you remove some of the superficial flaking, while aggressive movements can cause painful splitting or more scabbing.
- **Lose the towel.** Toweling off can cause more harm than good, since friction generally inflames lesions. If you don't have time to air dry, use a blow dryer on a low, cool setting to speed up the process without resorting to rubbing.

Psoriasis affects everyone a bit differently, and depending on the location and extent of your plaques, you may find that showering less is the best way to stay comfortable. Listen to your skin, and go easy on the soap, which can be very drying. When a shower seems like a bad idea, concentrate on spot treatment with a cool wet cloth.

Post-Shower Skin Care for Psoriasis

Treat your skin gently and carefully when you step out of the shower, too. Get in the habit of soothing extra sore spots, locking in moisture, and protecting against irritants right after you dry off: **Soothe:** After you have a shower to clean your body, consider having a bath to pamper your skin. Add some oatmeal, Epsom salts, or olive oil to the water and soak in the tub for 15 minutes. If you're short on time, simply wrap a wet towel or compress around the irritated area for a few minutes. **Moisturize:** A simple vitamin E cream can do the trick, but for extreme itch and soreness, doctors often prescribe thick ointments that coat rather than simply absorb into the skin. Whichever type of moisturizer you choose, be sure to gently pat it on your skin rather than quickly rubbing it in. **Protect:** Any contact with rough fabrics or surfaces can be irritating on your sensitive skin, so wrap yourself in a cotton robe or stick to soft and airy clothing. Laundry detergents can be terrible irritants, but there are many brands made for

sensitive skin, without added fragrance or harsh chemicals. In the end, you know best what helps or aggravates your psoriasis, so craft your shower routine around what suits you. Talk to your doctor, and be open to new topical treatments that you can combine with your healthy hygiene program.