Understanding Your Psoriasis Treatment Options

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What Are Your Psoriasis Treatment Options?

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Treatments for psoriasis vary depending on the kind of psoriasis you have and the severity of your disease. Since psoriasis is an autoimmune disease, some treatments work by decreasing the intensity of your body's immune response.

Psoriasis treatment aims to help slow the abnormally rapid growth of skin cells which cause psoriatic lesions. Other treatments help to soothe your skin by relieving itching, providing moisture and easing the pain.

Most people require a combination of therapies in order to obtain maximum effectiveness and symptom relief. If you suspect you have psoriasis, it is best to consult with or be referred to a dermatologist for an accurate diagnosis so that you will be able to obtain the most effective treatment for your psoriasis.

Psoriasis treatment focuses on making lifestyle changes, from eating a healthy diet to protecting your skin from the skin, taking oral or topical psoriasis medications (some of which can be prescription or topical based), natural or alternative therapies.

If you're looking for new ways to treat your psoriasis, there are seven main categories of psoriasis treatment you can try today or discuss with your primary care physician or dermatologist.

Lifestyle Approaches for Psoriasis Treatment

Making a few lifestyle changes can make a big difference to your skin and psoriasis. Here are five lifestyle changes to consider and include in your psoriasis treatment plan:

- **Drink plenty of fluids so that your skin will be kept hydrated and toxins will be eliminated efficiently.** Ideally, you should be consuming half a gallon (2 liters) of water every day and the easiest way to do this is by carrying around a water bottle with you and refilling it as you go. When purchasing a water bottle, look for one that is 8 oz. or more – this is another helpful way to keep track of how much water you are consuming or alternatively, you could track your water consumption with a fitness app.
- **Eat a healthy, simple diet free of dyes, MSG and other food additives, which have been proven to worsen symptoms of psoriasis.** Many people with psoriasis suffer from food allergies, so notice if your symptoms worsen after you have certain foods. Wheat and dairy products are common irritants. Include dietary fats rich in anti-inflammatory compounds. Coldwater, oily fish such as salmon, sardines, herring, and mackerel are excellent choices.
- **Reduce and manage stress in your life.** This may be exploring options to have a better work-life balance using flexible working arrangements with the company you may work for, or even just finding ways to take more time out for yourself in your busy schedule.

- **Protect your skin from exposure to sun, wind and extreme temperatures.** People living with Psoriasis tend to have highly sensitive skin, so ensuring you're wearing layers as often as possible to keep the elements from damaging your skin can help. Think scarves and gloves in winter, so the sensitive skin on your neck and hands isn't exposed to the icy temperatures.
- **Treat your skin gently.** Bathe in warm, not hot water. Avoid the use of irritating bathing aids such as brushes, loofas, and coarse washcloths. Use hypoallergenic or natural skin care products and avoid picking or scratching lesions, as this could lead to infection. Additionally, scratching your skin causes your body to release histamines, which promotes more itchiness. Try applying a cool cloth to itchy lesions or using topical remedies instead. If you scratch while you sleep, consider wearing soft cotton gloves at night.

Natural Remedies for Psoriasis

Natural remedies are an important part of a comprehensive psoriasis treatment program regardless of whether or not you employ pharmaceuticals. Take evening primrose oil and hypoallergenic multivitamin/ multimineral supplements daily. They ensure that you are getting the micronutrients your body needs to heal and reduce inflammation. You can apply evening primrose oil topically to skin lesions too.

Try Herbs

Herbs that enhance detoxification are beneficial. Some of the best herbs to use include yellow dock, kudzu, burdock, and dandelion root. You may consume them as teas, tinctures, or capsules. Herbs that benefit the skin must be used consistently; you may need to use them for a month or more before you see improvement in your skin.

Topical Herbal Remedies

Topical herbal remedies that promote comfort, relieve itchiness and support healing include calendula, chickweed, and plantain. You can apply the herbs as creams or lotions.

If creams or lotions are unavailable, simply dab cooled herbal tea to lesions three or four times a day. On the other hand, try drinking ginger and turmeric tea as it is known for its anti-inflammatory potential. You never know, having a cup of this tea every day may help ease your psoriasis symptoms a bit.

Herbal skin care preparations are superior to many widely available commercial products because they contain fewer preservatives and are often made with desirable organic ingredients.

Next page: more natural psoriasis remedies, over-the-counter and prescription topical psoriasis treatments.

Natural Remedies for Psoriasis

Oils

Consider exploring different types of oils. Coconut oil, for example, is an excellent choice if you're experiencing symptoms of psoriasis. Applying a liberal amount of coconut oil to your skin as part of your bathing and skincare routine can add an amazing amount of moisture to your skin, encouraging your psoriasis to repair itself and stop flaking so much. In doing this, it can relieve the itch and pain significantly.

Another oil to try out on psoriasis is tea tree oil. This one's got quite a strong smell, so you may want to apply this in the evening before bed, instead of when you're heading off to work. This one works more in the way that it can help avoid infections due to psoriasis. Mix it with a moisturizer or oil of your choice, so it's not too harsh on your skin. It's especially ideal for those who suffer from scalp psoriasis.

Keep In Mind

There are an abundance of natural remedies for psoriasis, and you'll encounter many products during your travels that claim to help treat psoriasis. Don't rubbish them all, sometimes it's worth a shot, and you'll stumble across an amazing find that does wonders.

It's not always just the big brand names that have the best quality products. Sometimes it can be the local naturopaths at the market that come up with an incredible mix of natural ingredients to help ease our stressed and sore flare-ups. It's a matter of trying and experimenting until you find some solutions you like.

Over-the-Counter Topical Psoriasis Treatment

Over-the-counter products are primarily used to relieve discomfort and improve the appearance of your skin. They can help to decrease scaling, prevent cracking and relieve itchiness. Over-the-counter products are used daily by many people living with psoriasis as a means to hydrate the skin.

Coal Tar and Salicylic Acid

Two commonly used ingredients in over-the-counter treatments are coal tar and salicylic acid. Coal tar is an old but effective remedy that relieves itchiness and slows down the growth of skin cells. Many people use shampoos that contain coal tar to relieve psoriatic lesions on the scalp.

Be careful with coal tar if you're out in the sun a bit, as its application can make your skin quite sensitive to sunlight. If you've used coal tar and you're planning on going out in the sun, try covering the affected areas, so the skin isn't damaged.

Salicylic acid helps to reduce scaling by gently peeling away excess layers of skin.

Hydrocortisone Cream

Some people use hydrocortisone cream or preparations that contain antihistamines. Check with your dermatologist regarding over-the-counter agents.

Topical Prescription Medications

Topical prescription medications help to slow the rate of cell growth, reducing plaque formation. They have anti-inflammatory actions that decrease pain and itchiness, and many come in forms that hydrate the skin. Several kinds of topical prescription medications are available. Steroidal and non-steroidal medications are available.

Steroid Creams

Depending on the severity of your psoriasis flare-up, your doctor may suggest trying steroid creams. There is a variety of steroid creams available that you can apply directly to the affected areas. The doctor may recommend you don't go out in direct sunlight when you've applied steroid creams as it can affect the skin.

Many people do try to avoid topical prescription medications if they have steroids in them, and this may be recommended if your flare-up is quite small and can be managed with other options. However, if you're sufferer an extensive flare-up, sometimes the steroid options are a quick solution that can rid you of the annoyance and pain in a relatively short amount of time. Sometimes it can be a matter of a week or so for a flare-up to fade and become more manageable with natural alternatives when you've used a steroid cream for a little while.

If you do decide to try a steroid option, listen to your doctor to find out about the correct method of applying, as sometimes they may recommend alternating and using different strengths at different times of the day.

Next page: Oral prescriptions for psoriasis treatment and phototherapy for psoriasis.

Oral Prescription Medications

While topical medications are beneficial, oral medications may be needed because psoriasis is a systemic disease. Oral medications are more effective than topical remedies as they reach the deep layers of the skin more effectively, are distributed throughout your entire body and impact your immune system more completely. They are also fast acting.

The use of oral medication for psoriasis is something that many doctors only recommend once you've explored your other alternatives. It's not the ideal solution and is generally something that would be explored in more severe cases of psoriasis.

However, because oral medications have systemic effects, they are more likely than topical remedies to produce undesirable side effects. The types of side effects that may be experienced from specific oral medications can include symptoms like tiredness, headaches, changes in mood, stomach pain, or swelling. It all depends on the type of medication you're taking and how your body responds. Everyone's different when it comes to medication.

Close monitoring of your health may be needed if you require the use of oral prescription medications. Their use is reserved for people who suffer from moderate to severe psoriasis or for people whose psoriasis does not respond to topical treatment.

Oral medications are used to control symptoms of pustular and erythrodermic types of psoriasis.

Biologic Medications

Biologic medications may be administered by injection or intravenously. They are powerful agents that suppress your immune system. While biologics can be extremely valuable, they are highly potent drugs that can cause severe side effects.

An interesting thing about biologics is that they target specific parts of an immune system, so there are specific biologics that will target the particular part of the immune system that could be causing someone's psoriasis.

As stated by the National Psoriasis Foundation, "The biologics used to treat psoriatic disease block the action of a specific type of immune cell called a T cell, or block proteins in the immune system, such as tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-alpha), interleukin 17-A, or interleukins 12 and 23. These cells and proteins all play a major role in developing psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis."

It's incredibly interesting and exciting that technology and science like this are becoming increasingly more available. However, if you need to use biologics, your health must be monitored carefully. You will need to undergo regular blood screening tests. You may suffer from an increased likelihood of contracting severe infections and other illnesses.

Biologic medicines are made from animal or human protein and alter the way that your immune system transmits messages. As a result, excess skin cell growth slows.

Phototherapy for Psoriasis

Phototherapy uses ultraviolet radiation to depress the actions of specific white blood cells, called T cells. By suppressing T cell activity, skin cell growth slows. Phototherapy may be delivered using several different techniques. Lasers, light boxes, and phototherapy kits are types of phototherapy.

Ultraviolet light B (UVB) phototherapy works by directly slowing skin cell growth. Psoralen and ultraviolet light A, also known as PUVA, makes your skin more sensitive to light. By increasing your skin's sensitivity to light, your cells reproduce at a slower rate.

Two types of laser therapy are used to provide phototherapy for psoriasis. They are excimer and pulsed dye

lasers. Excimer lasers are used to treat chronic areas of localized, hard to treat psoriasis. They work by exposing the affected area to a high-intensity dose of UVB light. Pulsed dye lasers are used to destroy tiny capillaries. With a reduced blood supply, psoriatic lesions are unable to form.

Phototherapy treatments can be done by a doctor or done at home using a phototherapy kit. It isn't recommended to use tanning beds to help treat your psoriasis, as this type of light doesn't have the type of light that will help treat psoriasis. It also raises your risk of melanoma significantly. Talk to your doctor about the type of phototherapy you're considering trying to make sure it's safe.

Sunlight also has a level of UVB light that can help to treat psoriasis. Again, you'll need to ensure you're exposing yourself at safe rates. Consider the intensity of the sun in your part of the world as well. The rate at which sunlight will help your skin versus damage it considerably will differ depending on where you're located.

The National Psoriasis Foundation recommends starting "with five to 10 minutes of noontime sun daily. Gradually increase exposure time by 30 seconds if the skin tolerates it." If you're exploring this method along with specific types of topical medications, make sure you check with your doctor as some topical treatments can make your skin much more susceptible to damage from sunlight.

Comprehensive Treatment of Psoriasis

Psoriasis treatment doesn't only focus on the prescription side of things, it also focuses on your lifestyle habits – from relieving stress to eating a psoriasis-friendly diet – and your emotional and mental health well-being.

Using a combination approach of natural, preventative, and state of the art therapies may provide you with better control of your psoriasis symptoms. Sometimes it takes time and experimenting with different techniques in order to obtain maximum benefit. Fortunately, we live at a time when access to ancient and modern healing techniques is widely available.

It's important to remember, while one psoriasis treatment may work for someone else, it may not work for you. Some people may find one type of treatment works while others find that a combination of therapies provides symptom relief.

Whether you're newly diagnosed with psoriasis or have been living with psoriasis for a long time, you understand that it comes with its own sets of challenges and frustrations. Remember to be patient with yourself and don't push yourself as it could worsen your symptoms and cause a potential psoriasis flare.