Bad Skin Habits

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Four Habits That May Be Making Your Psoriasis Worse

You may be unknowingly making your psoriasis worse. What you eat and drink impacts psoriasis, and how you bathe and care for your skin affects flare-ups. Let's look at some of the actions you may be taking that are causing you to have an increase in psoriasis symptoms.

Eating Foods You Are Sensitive To

You may have food allergies and sensitivities that are making your psoriasis worse. Foods containing gluten often cause sensitivity reactions in people who have a diagnosis of psoriasis. Other offenders are dairy products, refined sugars, and processed foods.

Processed and packaged foods contain a multiple of chemical compounds in the forms of dyes, preservatives, and conditioning agents. Each of the additives may precipitate an allergic or sensitivity reaction, which ultimately presents as a flare-up of psoriasis symptoms.

Pay special attention to what you are eating if you develop itchiness or discomfort after you eat a particular food. You may be able to identify patterns that link your dietary choices with increases in symptoms. If you think that you may be sensitive to a food or a food family, try eliminating it for one week. See if your psoriasis starts to improve or if you feel better in general. If improvement occurs, it is likely that you are sensitive to that food or food group.

You may be able to identify sensitivities by using a pulse test. To do a pulse test, count your pulse for one minute. Then eat the food which you are evaluating for sensitivity. Wait twenty to thirty minutes. Recheck your pulse. If your pulse rate increases by ten or twenty beats per minute, you are likely to have a sensitivity issue with that food. Eliminate the food from your diet or follow a rotation diet, which means only consuming small amounts of the offending food no more frequently than every four days.

Not Drinking Enough Water

If you are like most people, you may not drink enough water. Good hydration is essential for healthy skin. Your skin is the major detoxifying organ of your entire body. Be sure to drink plenty of water so that your body can detoxify and eliminate harmful substances efficiently. Good hydration plumps up cells in your skin and enhances healing of lesions.

You should aim to consume an amount of fluid measured in ounces equal to one half of your weight in pounds each day. For example, if you weigh one hundred forty pounds; you should drink a minimum of seventy ounces of fluids each day. Water is best; however juices and herbal teas are healthy choices too. Avoid coffee and alcoholic beverages as they possess dehydrating qualities.

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Itching Irritated Lesions

It is difficult not to scratch and pick at sore lesions. Even if you do not actively itch your lesions; be careful not to wear clothing that irritates your skin. Many people who have psoriasis wear long sleeved shirts or other garments which hide the lesions, but it is much more important to let the lesions be exposed to air and not become irritated than to worry about how your skin looks. While at first you may feel uncomfortable by having others see the psoriatic plaques, you may be surprised when other people notice the lesions and remark, “Oh, I didn’t know that you have psoriasis. I do too.”

When you itch your skin, your body releases chemical compounds known as histamines. Histamines accelerate the inflammatory response. The more that you itch, the more histamines are released. You initiate a vicious cycle of elevated levels of itchiness, histamines, and damage to your skin.

In addition to irritating your skin and possibly opening it up to infection, you are exposing your entire body to the effects of histamine. Other effects of histamine include general increases in irritability, anxiety, congestion, and discomfort. All of these effects reduce the ability of your immune system to prevent and heal psoriatic lesions.

Instead of itching your skin, use topical and internal remedies to reduce irritation and itchiness. Try drinking herbal teas which have relaxant properties. Iced peppermint tea is soothing and cooling when consumed as a beverage or applied topically to irritated areas. Skullcap, lemon balm, chamomile, and calendula are relaxing herbs which reduce inflammation and comfort irritated nerves which occur when itchiness is present.

Topical remedies that reduce itchiness and enhance healing include products made with chickweed, plantain, calendula, and evening primrose oil. Evening primrose oil is especially helpful as it contains compounds which lower levels of prostaglandin formation. Prostaglandins are involved in the inflammatory processes which precipitate the formation of psoriatic lesions. Evening primrose oil may be taken internally as well as applied externally to lesions.

Check with your health care provider about topical prescription remedies which aid the healing of lesions and relieve itchiness. Over the past few years, much has been learned about allergic and inflammatory responses, such as psoriasis. It is now recognized that allergic responses do not follow just one chemical pathway. Newer medications have been developed, based upon the recent discoveries. Medications are available which reduce itchiness without causing drowsiness.

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Using Bathing Practices which Damage Your Skin

If you have psoriasis, it is essential that you care for your skin in a gentle manner. Avoid the use of very hot water when you shower. Limit bath products to those which contain natural, soothing ingredients that do not dry out or inflame your skin. Be sure to clean your skin after exercising. Avoid using loofas, brushes, and coarse washcloths. Buy simple soaps which provide moisture and are fragrance free. Glycerin based soaps and products made with oatmeal are often beneficial.

Rather than applying moisturizers which are laden with irritating chemicals, try this Ayurvedic practice. Massage your body with a natural oil prior to your shower. Rinse the oil off while you are bathing. Your skin will be softened, protected, and moisturized without the use of products which contain harmful and irritating ingredients. Be careful not to apply too much oil or your shower floor may become slippery and become a fall hazard.

Untoasted sesame oil is traditionally recommended by Ayurvedic experts. Other beneficial oils include apricot kernel, avocado, grape seed, and calendula.

Apricot kernel oil is excellent for sensitive skin. It contains large amounts of healing vitamin A and possesses a nice texture. Apricot kernel oil has a short shelf life. Add several drops of vitamin E to it in order to keep it fresh.

Avocado oil also has a short shelf life. It is extremely nourishing, as it contains many vitamins. Avocado oil is an outstanding choice if you have mature skin.

Calendula oil is an infused oil. You may make it or purchase the oil from an herbalist. Calendula is a flower which contains a multitude of anti-inflammatory, healing, and protective qualities.

Grape seed oil has a long shelf life. It is a fairly light oil which is well tolerated by most people. You may want to use it to extend the amounts of other oils as it is less costly than the apricot, avocado, or calendula oils.

If you prefer to use fragrant bath products, add a few drops of essential oils to the base oils. Essential oils which may reduce symptoms of psoriasis include lavender, chamomile, cedar wood, juniper, melissa, patchouli, rose, and lemon thyme.

Steps to Better Management of Psoriasis

It is simple to get off track and take actions which worsen symptoms of psoriasis. With awareness and planning, it is easy to adopt new habits that reduce symptoms and enhance the health of your entire body.

Eat well, drink plenty of fluids, check out new strategies for relieving itchiness, and enjoy some luxurious bathing practices. You will feel better, look fabulous, and find that your skin becomes healthier with each passing day.