Psoriasis and Kidney Problems

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The Link Between Skin Health and Kidney Health

Psoriasis can cause widespread discomfort, and the effects are not just skin deep. For some, this auto-immune disorder attacks the joints, and for others, diabetes and cardiovascular disease become a concern. A recent study of nearly 150,000 patients with psoriasis has shown that the itchy, scaly, chronic skin condition can also increase a person's chance of developing chronic kidney disease, and even kidney failure.

Risk Factors for Psoriasis and Kidney Problems

Mild psoriasis may bring some uncomfortable symptoms, but it doesn't seem to account for an increase in kidney disease risk. The UK study also determined that gender does not play a role in risk level either, but there are two factors that undoubtedly impact your chances of developing chronic kidney disease:

Severity – People with moderate or severe psoriasis seem to be at greater risk for developing kidney problems. In the study, those with the most severe psoriasis had twice the risk of kidney disease, and were four times as likely to experience kidney failure requiring dialysis. Therefore, the extent of your psoriasis plaques and scales seem to play a role in your kidney health, especially when they cover more than 10% of your body.

Age – The risk for kidney disease increases after age 40, and even more after age 50. The study found that participants between the ages of 40 and 50 with severe psoriasis had one extra case of chronic kidney disease due to psoriasis in every 134 patients, and for those between 50 and 60 years old, one additional case occurred for every 62 patients annually.

Protecting Your Kidneys and Treating Psoriasis

More than 20% of psoriasis patients have a moderate to severe form of the disease, and for them, the danger to the kidneys deserves more attention. Even those who suffer from mild psoriasis, or are in remission from their flares, should pay attention to kidney health now, in case their psoriasis takes a turn for the worse.

- **Take a look at your medication.** Certain medications, like corticosteroids, may have an effect on kidney health, especially when used for a long time. Corticosteroids are often used in topical ointments for psoriasis treatment, so talk to your doctor about adjusting your treatment plan to include an oral medication or steroid-free therapeutic cream.

- **Make some menu changes.** Anyone at risk for kidney disease should limit their salt intake, since too much sodium can tax the kidneys. You may also want to take a closer look at your favourite treats, because a high blood cholesterol level has been shown to increase the risk of kidney disease, too. Since psoriasis is an inflammatory disease, it follows that an anti-inflammatory diet low in cholesterol will be best for your overall health and comfort.
- **Control flares.** Since psoriasis severity has such an impact on kidney disease, it's important to keep your

condition from spiralling out of control. If you notice more frequent or changing plaques, visit your doctor to assess your options and adjust your treatment plan. The quicker you can make the necessary changes, the better you can halt the spread of the disease and avoid complications.

It’s important to keep on top of your health, and that means consulting with your doctor regularly about your psoriasis, but also about other conditions that your psoriasis could bring on. Have regular blood tests and any other screening that your doctor may prescribe, and be sure to keep a record of symptoms, medications, and reactions for yourself, so you can act on any concerns right away.