Preventing a Psoriasis Infection

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Skin Infections: Treatment and Prevention

A psoriasis lesion means the skin is broken and irritated, therefore is more prone to complicate with a skin infection. Additionally, some drugs used for the management of psoriasis work by suppressing the immune system, therefore increasing the risk of infections. Any type of infection can trigger a psoriasis flare up, so it's important to do all you can to prevent a psoriasis infection, and get treatment promptly if you do get one.

Types of Infections

Your skin can become infected with bacteria, viruses or fungi. An infection may affect the superficial skin, but also its deeper layers, leading to cellulitis. Staph and strep are the most common bacteria that are linked with cellulitis.

In case of cellulitis, one may experience fever, along with the common signs of inflammation/infection: swollen, tender, warm, red skin. Cellulitis should be treated promptly, because otherwise it can complicate with an abscess (collection of pus), or the infection can spread to the blood, when the condition can become life threatening.

Treatment

If you notice a skin infection, you should see your doctor right away, as you may need treatment. For bacterial infections your doctor may prescribe antibiotics; if the antibiotics don’t help and the infection leads to an abscess, you may need an incision to drain the infected material.

If you take anti-TNF drugs (etanercept, infliximab, adalimumab) there is an increased risk of cellulitis, and your doctor will look into alternative options.

Besides anti-TNF drugs, medication such as Methotrexate, cyclosporine can also increase the risk of infections, because they all suppress the immune system and its ability to fight various micro organisms

Tips to Prevent Skin Infections

- Use antibacterial soaps when you wash your skin. For example, you can find brands like Dial or Level 2000 in most grocery stores or pharmacies.
- If the soap does not protect enough your skin from infections, the next to consider would be cleansers based on benzoyl peroxide. This ingredient has stronger antibacterial action, and is widely used for managing acne. For psoriasis lesions, you can use bars, lotions, creams and gels that contain benzoyl peroxide. Start applying this product once a day and see if your skin improves.
- To manage cellulitis, you can take a special bath two times a week. For 40 gallons of water, add a quarter to a half cup of sodium hypochlorite. Don’t spend more than 10-15 minutes in the bath, and then shower to rinse and then apply your regular moisturizers. You may need to apply more moisturizer than usual, because sodium hypochlorite makes your skin drier.

- Change and wash your clothes regularly. If you don’t wash your clothes often, bacteria will live in them and get on your skin.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle, to help your immune system fight infections. Eat healthy, do not smoke and avoid excessive alcohol consumption. Exercise regularly and sleep 8 hours every night. Stress can trigger flare-ups and make you more likely to catch an infection, so practice stress management techniques such as deep breathing and meditation.