Psoriasis and Sugar

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The Relationship Between Psoriasis and Sugar

Is your diet, and sugar specifically, making your symptoms worse? The value of nutrition is often underestimated, although it plays an important role in your condition. Study after study reveals that you do need to pay attention to what you eat, more than you might think.

Simply said, refined sugar causes chronic inflammation, which is already an underlying problem associated with psoriasis.

Psoriasis and Inflammation

By definition, psoriasis is an autoimmune disease characterized by inflammation of the skin and joints. However, the inflammation is systemic, which means it affects the whole body. The result: there is an increased risk of co-morbid conditions like heart attacks and strokes.

Studies have found that psoriasis patients are more likely to have heart attacks and strokes, especially if the person is younger and has their psoriasis is more severe. Furthermore, the life expectancy is reduced by three to four years as compared with healthy population.

Medical experts from Harvard Medical School explain the link between diet and inflammation like this: chronic, low-grade inflammation is an underlying problem in the process of atherosclerosis (hardening the arteries), which leads to clogged arteries and increases your chances for heart attacks, strokes, diabetes or vascular dementia. While doctors are now researching new drugs to target this low grad inflammation, you can ease this inflammation by changing your diet, and improve your lifestyle.

Refined Sugar Consumption Leads to Chronic Inflammation

This type of inflammation does not occur suddenly or without reason, indicate Harvard doctors. Inflammation develops as a result of modern lifestyle, being triggered by highly processed foods (the typical Western diet which is high in sugar, fat and calories), smoking, and lack of exercise. For example, refined sugar (i.e. from white bread, French fries, sugary beverages) is known to raise the levels of certain cytokines, which are inflammatory cells. On the other hand, whole grains like brown rice help decrease the production of these pro-inflammatory cells.

Sugar Isn't the Only Problem

Bad fats, too many calories and nutrient-poor foods, as well as unhealthy lifestyle choices like smoking and lack of exercise, all contribute to inflammation. A review of multiple studies published in 2010 in the “Indian Journal of Dermatology” found there is a link between skin problems and nutritional deficiencies. These nutrient deficiencies can be caused by a Western-type diet and by medication. Food allergies (i.e. gluten sensitivity) are common in

psoriasis patients and removing gluten (or other food allergens) from the diet can lead to improvements, suggests this review.

Tips to Improve Your Diet

1. If you regularly consume fast foods, it is time to reconsider your diet. Switch from saturated and trans fats to omega 3 rich foods like olive oil, fish, nuts and seeds (omega 3 has strong anti inflammatory qualities)
2. Switch from refined sugars to healthier sugars like whole grains (but remember it’s worth trying a gluten-free diet). Regular pasta can be replaced by brown rice pasta or spaghetti squash. Fresh fruits are a great alternative to cookies and pastry.
3. Fresh fruits and vegetables should be on your plate every day. They are loaded with vitamins and minerals, and other chemicals that fight inflammation. Spices like turmeric, ginger and garlic can also help reduce inflammation.
4. Don’t drink too much alcohol. One drink a day was found to decrease CPR levels (a marker of inflammation), where excessive consumption has the opposite effect. Don’t smoke and work out at least 3-4 times a week.