Six Symptoms of Psoriasis You Need to Be Aware Of

by LARA WYATT

Getting to Know Psoriasis Symptoms

When a psoriasis flare comes on, and you've never experienced it before, it can be quite a scary situation to deal with. The symptoms of psoriasis can vary from person to person, but most of them can come on quite severely, and there's a level of discomfort and awkwardness that comes with it.

There's also no one size fits all when it comes to psoriasis and psoriasis symptoms. What you might experience with one flare-up may be completely different from what you experience during a future flare-up. Also, your symptoms of psoriasis may be present in various locations around your body, not just the one.

There are also so many different ways to manage and cope with the different types of psoriasis symptoms you may encounter — everything from maintaining a healthy lifestyle and often exercising, through to exploring natural remedies and drinking enough water.

What Are the Symptoms of Psoriasis?

Here's an outline about the most common psoriasis symptoms you may experience and where they may present themselves, as well as an insight into the variety of ways you can try to reduce a symptom's impact on your life.

Red Patches

From my own personal experience, the red patches that indicate you're dealing with a psoriasis flare-up are one of the harder psoriasis symptoms to hide. They can appear nearly anywhere on your body, but often they're found appearing on the knees, elbows, back, and scalp. But don't be surprised if red patches appear between your fingers, on your neck, or even on your buttocks.

Psoriasis redness can appear anywhere, especially areas that tend to be a bit more dry, like the knees and elbows. It's a good idea to keep your skin moisturized as often as you can, as it may prevent the skin from splitting or scaling.

Unfortunately, having redness of the skin doesn't help narrow down the type of psoriasis you may be suffering from. Plaque, guttate, inverse, pustular, and erythrodermic psoriasis all mention red patches or areas as a symptom.

Scaling Areas

This symptom of psoriasis can be particularly annoying. Suffering from psoriasis causes your immune system attacks the wrong cells, causing an overproduction of skin cells.

When the overproduction of skill cells occurs, your skin can start to scale and flake off. This is often seen when

someone’s suffering from scalp psoriasis, and it can give the appearance of suffering from dandruff as flakes of skin can fall from your hairline at any time.

Many different lotions and potions are recommended for when your skin is flaking and scaling. One of the most important parts of this symptom is to keep moisturizing your skin. When your skin is dry, it will flake off more prevalently. But if it’s keep moistened, your skin tends to soften, and the flaking doesn’t happen as rapidly.

Dry, Bleeding Skin

While talking about keeping your skin hydrated while suffering from psoriasis, another symptom, and one that rears up particularly when your skin is very dry, is having dry, bleeding skin. This symptom can appear as deep cracks in the skin, which are called fissures.

There’s a wide variety of ways that you can help to treat this symptom to make it easier to manage and far less painful.

The first way to help treat this symptom, and at the risk of sounding like a broken record: keep your skin moisturized and hydrated. Coconut oil is a lifesaver for dry skin. It will soak in and keep your skin nice and moist for extended periods of time.

You also need to make sure you keep your hands super clean. Make sure you rinse out the cracks with lukewarm water to make sure you don’t get them infected. You can also seal the cracks as a temporary measure using something like a bandage or liquid bandage. Even things like a balm can help to seal the area and keep it clean.

Next page: More psoriasis symptoms to be aware of, and ways to cope with psoriasis symptoms.

Itching and Burning Sensations

When your skin is red, scaly, or otherwise irritated due to a psoriasis flare-up, your skin may also become itchy, or have a burning sensation. Often, when someone with psoriasis is feeling itchy or like their skin is burning, it’s referred to as the psoriatic itch.

Psoriatic itch is felt by up to 90 percent of people living with psoriasis, and it’s been described as less of your normal itchy sensation and more of a biting sort of burn. It’s also only recently been recognized as an official symptom of psoriasis.

Thickened Nails

Another symptom of psoriasis affects the fingernails and toenails. In some instances, you may find that your nails are thickening. They may have ridges on the nails, or they may be lifting away from your nail bed.

Along with the thickening of the nails, there’s also the chance that you may notice other things happening to them. You may notice some discoloration that may look like blood drops under the nail, white patches, or black lines.

There may also be horizontal lines across your nails. If your nails end up becoming weak, they may crumble or fall apart. The last thing to be aware of is that people who suffer from nail changes as a symptom of psoriasis may also have psoriatic arthritis at some point in their life.

Swollen Joints

Swollen or stiff joints are the main symptom of psoriatic arthritis. Unfortunately, the stiffness or swelling can affect any part of your body.

When you're suffering from this symptom, you may notice that your joints swell, feel warm, and are sore. This swelling is still a result of psoriasis being an autoimmune disorder because your body attacks healthy cells and tissue, causing the inflammation in the joints. This is the same as your body attacking healthy skin cells causing an overproduction.

Swollen joints and stiffness can also be a sign that you have psoriatic arthritis. If this is the case, swelling and pain are most often felt in the toes and fingers — but it can affect other areas of the body as well.

Depending on the severity of psoriatic arthritis, pain and swelling can be managed by non-steroid drugs like ibuprofen and aspirin. More severe instances may need different medication, but your doctor will be able to talk you through the options that are right for you.

To ease the pain you feel with psoriatic arthritis, or even just joint swelling, there are certain types of foods you can avoid. This includes dairy, potatoes, tomatoes, foods with refined sugar, and processed foods. Eating fish is a good idea, as the fish oils are good for inflammation.

Ways to Cope With Psoriasis and Psoriasis Symptoms

Psoriasis is one of those conditions that can't quite be diagnosed completely perfectly, and there's no sure-fire way to say how it was triggered, you have to manage it in a way that works best for you.

There are, however, several doctor-recommended approaches that you could adapt into your lifestyle to try and deal with psoriasis and avoid even getting the symptoms.

Keep Stress to a Minimum

When you're feeling the symptoms of psoriasis, you can tend to panic and stress a bit. This causes a vicious cycle, where stressing can irritate your skin even more.

There are many ways you could incorporate calm and mindfulness into your routine to try to limit stress where possible. The art of yoga and meditation are great methods of keeping your mind cool, calm, and collected. Even 10 minutes a day of meditation using an app like Headspace can be beneficial.

Also, remember to make time for yourself. It's hard to stay stress-free when you're rushing around doing things for everyone else. Even if it's just taking time out for a bath instead of a shower once a week, or watching a TV show, you've wanted to watch for a while, or maybe you want to curl up with a book for an hour or so.

Get More Sleep

You must remember your parents telling you that the more you slept, the more you'd grow or the better you'd feel. Well, getting sufficient sleep can help your skin do the repairing it needs to do. So you can help ease psoriatic itch with a proper sleep regime. However, this is another one that can exist in a bit of a vicious cycle.

Although you may know that psoriasis will benefit from getting more sleep, when you're suffering from psoriatic itch, you can be incredibly uncomfortable, meaning it's a lot harder to get quality sleep. Also, when you're feeling irritable from not getting enough sleep, you get stressed and end up more exhausted, which are both different triggers for psoriasis.

It's an incredibly difficult cycle, but if you can keep calm and remind yourself that the flare-up won't last forever, you may be able to settle into slumber.

Next page: More ways to cope with psoriasis symptoms.

Quit Smoking

This one only applies if you're not already a smoker. But if you don't smoke, don't start now. Nicotine (present in cigarettes) is known to affect the immune system.

With psoriasis being an autoimmune disorder, there's a connection between the onset of psoriasis being triggered by smoking. There are also thousands of chemicals in cigarettes that will not produce good reactions when it comes to your immune system. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is a major factor when it comes to managing psoriasis, and smoking doesn't factor into this picture.

Not only does smoking bring on the onset of psoriasis, but it can also make the effects of psoriasis a lot worse. Those who have psoriasis who also smoke may see their likelihood for things like cardiovascular disease increase.

If you're currently a smoker and also suffer from psoriasis, you can talk to your doctor who can help you come up with a plan to help you quit smoking and get your health on track to help your psoriasis.

Eat Well

Maintaining a healthy diet can help to prevent psoriasis outbreaks. There are types of psoriasis that are thought to be connected with being overweight, so eating healthy foods and making sure you keep your health in check may help you avoid psoriasis symptoms.

There are some types of foods that can help your skin, like fish. Fish oils are thought to help ease inflammation, which is great considering psoriasis is an inflammatory skin condition. Also, eating inflammation-reducing vegetables like carrots and spinach can also help relieve the symptoms of psoriasis.

Avoid Alcohol

Alcohol's no good for your body, so it makes sense to try to keep it out of your diet. It's also known to make specific psoriasis treatments less effective. There are theories that alcohol can trigger psoriasis because drinking alcohol can cause your body to react and produce cells that cause skin cells to overproduce. Alcohol also weakens your immune system, and considering psoriasis is an autoimmune condition, alcohol wouldn't help your body in being able to fight off attacks on your body correctly.

Stay Hydrated and Moisturized

Give your body what it needs and stay hydrated both from the inside and the outside. Make sure you're upping your fluid intake, but also find a moisturizer that works for you, and make sure you're using it regularly to keep your psoriasis symptoms in check. If you haven't already, try a nightly coat of coconut oil on the affected areas. It'll boost the moisture in the area and keep your skin soft.

You can make sure you're drinking plenty of water by carrying around a drink bottle with you everywhere you go. Just pop it in your bag, and you won't need to go and buy wasteful water bottles all the time. Try drink around a liter of water a day. This may be hard for those who don't like water, but popping a lemon in, or cucumber and mint, may make getting those fluids into your system a bit easier.

Also, try swapping your coffees for a tea. You'll be getting some lovely herbal goodness into you and replacing the hefty amount of dairy. You could also use the process of making your cup of tea as a time to provide yourself with a relaxing, warm break from a busy day.

Try Natural Remedies

Many different natural remedies are coming out on the market all the time — everything from coconut-oil based lotions to coal tar scrubs. I enjoy experimenting with a variety of different natural lotions and potions. I have several different types that I alternate and use depending on the severity of a flare-up. Often I will dab a small amount of coal tar liquid onto affected areas when I'm showering. Other times I'll lather up in coconut oil before

bed so that it can sink into my skin properly and thoroughly moisturize affected areas while I’m asleep.

I’ve also found some unexpected but incredible remedies from craft markets that I’ve been to over the years. So it’s always a good idea to check out what’s available from places that aren’t just your local pharmacy. You may stumble across something that’s not well known but is someone’s grandma’s secret potion that works an absolute treat.

Although sometimes it’s easy to jump straight into the steroid fixes, it’s not a bad idea to find a natural remedy that can help nip a flare-up in the bud before it comes on too strongly. Then you’re giving your body a break from steroids, and your body may respond to them better in situations where you do need to use them.

What to Do If You're Experiencing Psoriasis Symptoms

There are so many different types of psoriasis, meaning there is an abundance of symptoms that may indicate it’s what you’re dealing with. Because psoriasis is one of those conditions that is believed to be triggered by stress, it’s important to try and keep calm when you think you’re dealing with one of these symptoms we’ve discussed. Stressing may result in exacerbating the symptom, making it worse.

If you think you’ve got a symptom of psoriasis but you’ve never been officially diagnosed, it’s a good idea to talk to your doctor while the symptom is still present. This way the doctor can take any tests or samples while the flare-up is occurring, giving you a higher chance of an accurate diagnosis.

If you do end up being diagnosed with psoriasis, don’t forget that there are so many different ways of being able to treat and manage the condition. There are always more and more natural remedies being created for you to try, and as years go by, more and more research is being carried out to find ways to better manage and, maybe hopefully in the future, even cure the condition.

In the meantime, try these coping mechanisms I’ve outlined if you’re dealing with a flare-up of a symptom. It’s even a great idea to adopt these ways of living into your routine while you’re not dealing with a symptom to try and avoid one in the future.