

Psoriasis



Psoriasis is an autoimmune condition that causes skin cells to mature much more rapidly than normal, resulting in skin redness and irritation. Most persons with psoriasis tend to have thick red skin with flaky, silver-white patches called scales.

Although psoriasis may occur on any skin surface, it is often seen on the elbows, knees and scalp. Psoriasis can also affect joints and cause nail changes, including nail thickening, yellow-brown spots, dents (pits) on the nail surface and separation of the nail from the base.

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NUTRITION TIPS:

Nutrition can help promote healthy skin. Limit the consumption of alcohol, especially beer, and other gluten foods and known allergens, i.e., dairy, sugar and citrus. Add alkaline foods to your diet, i.e., leafy greens, herbs, and vegetables in lieu of acidic foods, i.e., animal products. Eat foods with high levels of omega-3 fatty acids, i.e., flaxseed oil, salmon, trout, tuna. Foods high in beta-carotene, i.e., carrots, apricots, mangoes, help reduce inflammation and improve the strength of the immune system. Drink lots of water to help hydrate your skin.

SKIN CARE TIPS:

Treatment works to hydrate the skin and minimize irritation. Topical options include dead sea salt baths and light exfoliation products, i.e., AHA (lactic) based body creams; topical steroid medications; and light therapy. Apply moisturizer liberally, especially after bathing, to prevent the itch and pain of dry skin and reduce scaling and inflammation. Moisturize at night to maintain hydration of the epidermis. It may be soothing to apply moisturizer that has been refrigerated. Patients using retinoids should apply sunscreen 15 to 20 minutes before going outdoors and wear protective clothing for sun protection. Systemic treatments may be an option for more extensive involvement.

BEWARE THE KOEBNER PHENOMENON:

For people with psoriasis, trauma to the skin can cause new psoriasis plaques to develop at the site of injury or for old plaques to spread. For this reason, persons with psoriasis should avoid skin injury whenever possible. Sunburn is known to cause Koebnerization, so use sun protection appropriately. How badly a person will "Koebnerize" will vary. Some will Koebnerize so easily that leaning on an elbow for too long or being chaffed by a car seat belt can turn the skin psoriatic in a matter of hours. Others may be less susceptible.

ALWAYS BE GENTLE TO SKIN WITH PSORIASIS:

Pat dry after bathing, never rub. Don't scrub or scrape excess flakes off. Avoid any sort of physical plaque removal. Opt for long water soaks, which cause the flakes to swell up and float away, or salicylic acid (unless you have bad reactions to that, of course). Take care with scalp psoriasis when applying topical medications to avoid a Koebner response. And hydrate, hydrate, hydrate to avoid the damage associated with itching.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT AND LIFESTYLE:

An unhealthy weight can trigger a psoriasis flare and may complicate the beneficial effects of treatment. Cigarette smoking can also impair blood flow to the skin and should be restricted.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

The National Psoriasis Foundation at psoriasis.org

caring for the skin you're in!

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