

Women and Psoriasis: Findings from a Survey of Women with Psoriatic Disease

In a survey of over 100 women with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis (psoriatic disease), almost half of the respondents said that social support from friends and family was most helpful in dealing with issues related to self-image, stigma and mental health.

This is really important because overall, research shows that women with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis experience more severe health-related quality of life challenges compared to men.

- One survey of 5,000 patients showed that 20 percent of women said psoriasis is a very large problem in their everyday lives, compared to 12 percent of men.¹
- Nearly 60 percent of women said psoriasis interferes with their capacity to enjoy life, compared to 52 percent of men.²
- A World Psoriasis Happiness Report finds that women with self-reported psoriasis identify as less happy, more lonely and isolated and more ashamed of their condition than men with psoriasis overall.³
- Women are also more likely to feel an impact of psoriasis on their self-esteem and relationships.⁴

Psoriatic disease can affect the whole family.

- Family planning decisions, including everything from treatment decisions to lifestyle choices to preparing for the birth of a baby can be affected by a woman's diagnosis of psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis. Yet, one study found that 33% of patients with psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis delayed informing their specialist about their pregnancy and 20% did not tell them at all.⁵
- It can also affect finances. In fact, 10% of survey respondents indicated that they pay for their medication treatments out-of-pocket and 3% responded that they don't take medications because they cannot afford them.

What we heard

Overall, the survey results highlight what we already know – that there is no single experience of psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis. However it did point to some overall themes and observations:

- Self-image seems to be a prominent moderate-severe concern for women with these conditions over the life span.
- Women identified dealing with severe-to-moderate self-image concerns specifically in adolescence (50%), adulthood (39% severe, 48% moderate) and parenthood (52% moderate).
- Mental health emerged as a moderate issue for respondents during menopause (53%) and adolescence (45%).

Experiences with self-image, stigma and mental health issues

"I became distant with people, anticipating the fact that I might experience [being unwanted] because of what I have on my skin, it hinders me looking for a job, because of what I feel inside and out, every day is such a struggle."

"Most experiences in public were filled with looks and whispers."

"I feel I was judged and made to feel that this was something I could control. Did not seek another relationship after marriage break up. Every year wished summer was over (once I was asked to leave a public pool; it was the last time I ever went..really just putting it down on paper invokes those same feelings..."

"When I had more severe psoriasis on my face I was often asked if it was contagious. I grew my hair out to hide my face."

1 National Psoriasis Foundation (NPF). (2015). Women and the heavy toll of psoriasis. Retrieved from <https://www.psoriasis.org/advance/women-and-psoriasis>. Retrieved on Oct 1, 2019.

2 Ibid.

3 LEO Innovation Lab, The Happiness Research Institute. (2018). World Psoriasis Happiness Report 2018. Retrieved from <https://psoriasis-happiness-report.com/static/documents/world-psoriasis-happiness-report-2018.pdf>. Retrieved on October 1, 2019.

4 Kurizky, Patricia Shu, & Mota, Licia Maria Henrique da. (2012). Sexual dysfunction in patients with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis - a systematic review. Revista Brasileira de Reumatologia, 52(6), 943-948. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0482-50042012000600011>

5 Lebowitz, M., Van Vorhees AS, Siegel M, Shankle L, Pisenti L, Yassine M. A Comprehensive Survey Assessing the Family Planning Needs of Women with Psoriasis. Poster session presented at The 5th World Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis Conference; 2018 June 27-30; Stockholm, Sweden

What helped

“All of them [resources] have been helpful but support of friends and family is paramount.”

“The love and support from my family supports me in all that I do and this journey has been no different!”

“Family - unconditional love of parents in early years and support and caring of husband.”

“Knowing I’m not alone.”

“Someone to listen to me and understand what I was going through!”

How you can help as a family member / friend

Learn about psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. Not only will this provide insights about your family member/friends but you can help to share knowledge and information with others.

Encourage your family member/friend to talk to their doctor or dermatologist if they are struggling with symptoms or distress related to their condition.

Psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis can affect the whole family. Recognize your own needs and reach out for information or help when you need it.

Recognize the important role you may play as a support for your friend/family member. Connect with organizations like ours for information and support.




The Canadian Psoriasis Network (CPN) is a national non-profit organization focused on enhancing the quality of life of people with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. We do this by providing current information on research and treatment options and by working with others to build awareness and advocacy about the complexity of these conditions.

Find out more at:

 <https://www.canadianpsoriasisnetwork.com/>

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