

ABOUT PSORIASIS

Psoriasis is a non-contagious, chronic inflammatory condition that affects the regeneration of skin cells. People with psoriasis are at risk of developing psoriatic arthritis and other associated conditions like diabetes, depression, metabolic syndrome, cardiovascular disease and inflammatory bowel diseases.

Treatments are often chosen based on the type and severity of the psoriasis a person experiences. Despite a wide-range of options, psoriasis can be a challenging disease to treat and live with; educate yourself about your disease and how best to manage it.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF...SOME TIPS

RECOGNIZE AND MINIMIZE TRIGGERS

- Everyone is different so what acts as a trigger for one person is different than what triggers someone else.
- Find out what causes worsening of your psoriasis by documenting any changes that happen before a flare-up in a journal. If you see any patterns emerge, try to prevent or avoid them.
- Limit or eliminate alcohol consumption, which is known to cause flare-ups or interfere with psoriasis treatments. Ask your doctor or other health care provider for help if you need to.
- Experts agree that quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your general health. Quitting also lowers the risk of heart disease and a host of other health conditions that occur at increased rates in psoriasis patients. Again, your health care team is there to help you.
- Obesity has been linked to psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. It is important to eat a healthy diet and to stay active, especially if you live with a chronic disease. Even small changes can make a big difference.
- Discuss any triggers and diet issues with your health care provider. They can also provide you with helpful resources and tips to best minimize exposure to triggers, such as medications to help quit smoking.



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UNDERSTANDING YOUR TREATMENT OPTIONS



Stay connected and get support by becoming a member of the Canadian Psoriasis Network.
Register online, it is FREE! cpn-rcp.com

TREATING PSORIASIS

While there is no cure for psoriasis, a wide variety of treatment options exist for people living with the inflammatory disease. Treatments are usually categorized into the following groups: topical, light- or phototherapy, systemic or biologic therapy.

TOPICALS

Topical treatments such as creams and ointments are often the first therapies recommended to treat psoriasis. Topical treatments primarily work by reducing inflammation and slowing down and regulating skin cell turnover. Topicals exist in many different forms, such as lotions, creams, ointments, foams, or shampoo. Depending on the location of psoriasis plaques on the body, a specific formulation may be better suited for treatment. Many topical medications require a prescription, but some do not. When psoriasis is more severe, topicals are likely to be combined with oral medications, phototherapy, or biologics.



PHOTOTHERAPY

As the name suggests, this psoriasis treatment uses natural or artificial ultraviolet light. Medically-supervised phototherapy is the preferred method of phototherapy as it minimizes the risk of skin cancer by controlling the type and amount of ultraviolet light. Forms of light therapy include the medically-supervised use of ultraviolet A (UVA) or ultraviolet B (UVB) light. In any form, light treatment is only effective if you get short-term exposure – burns and skin damage can worsen psoriasis symptoms. Phototherapy requires repeated exposure of the skin to ultraviolet light using one of several techniques. The procedure is done under medical supervision and may be advised when topicals alone are not effective.



SYSTEMIC MEDICATIONS

Systemic medications are available by prescription only. Taken orally or by injection, they affect the entire body. Traditional systemic drugs for psoriasis are typically prescribed when topical treatment fails to adequately treat psoriasis. These medications work by suppressing the overactive immune system in psoriasis.



BIOLOGICS AND BIOSIMILARS

Biologics are the newest group of drugs approved for the treatment of moderate-to-severe psoriasis. These drugs are given

by intravenous infusion or subcutaneous (under the skin) injection, and are usually prescribed to patients who have moderate-to-severe psoriasis who have failed to respond to traditional therapy or who have associated psoriatic arthritis. Biologics work by blocking interactions between certain immune system cells and inflammatory pathways that are responsible for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.

Biosimilars are biologic medications that are similar to, but not identical to, an existing biologic (known as the reference biologic drug). Health Canada evaluates all the information provided to confirm that the biosimilar and the reference biologic drug are similar and that there are no clinically meaningful differences in safety and efficacy between them. Biosimilars, however, are not the same as generic drugs, due to the size, complexity and natural variability of biologic drugs.

COMBINATION TREATMENT

In order to achieve acceptable disease control, occasionally it is necessary to use more than one medication to treat psoriasis. This is known as combination therapy. Topical medications are often used in conjunction with other treatments for psoriasis, and occasionally oral or biologic medications are combined with phototherapy. Biologic drugs should not be used together. Combination therapy allows your care team to help you find the best treatment for you. However, using more than one medication to treat psoriasis can also increase the cost of treatment and the amount of effort required to follow treatment directions.

NON-PHARMACOLOGIC & LIFESTYLE

OVER-THE-COUNTER TOPICALS

Over-the-counter (OTC) topical treatments are available in pharmacies and drugstores without a prescription from a physician or health care provider. Over-the-counter medications are typically used in very mild cases of psoriasis, or in addition to other prescription therapies in moderate to severe disease. OTC topical treatments typically contain coal tar or ingredients to help lift scale such as salicylic acid, lactic acid, or urea. Heavy moisturizers can also be helpful by reducing redness and itch.



DIET AND EXERCISE

In people with psoriasis who are overweight or obese, there is some evidence that dietary and lifestyle changes to reduce weight may decrease severity of psoriasis and improve



quality of life. Weight loss can also reduce the severity of symptoms from psoriatic arthritis. Regardless of disease status, maintaining a healthy weight can help improve your overall health and reduce your risk of heart disease and diabetes.

NATUROPATHY

Two clinical trials have looked at whether fish oil supplementation can improve psoriasis severity, but did not find any benefit. If you would like to try using a natural health product or supplement, always consult with a health care provider first to ensure it does not interact with any other medications you are taking.

MEDICAL CANNABIS

Recent review of data does not support the use of medical cannabis for psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis.

MENTAL HEALTH

Thinking about your mental health is important especially when you live with a chronic health condition. Engage in self-care and practices like meditation and yoga. Connect with others through networks and support groups. Talk to your health care provider if you are struggling with anxiety or depression.



To learn more about treatments for psoriasis, visit cpn-rcp.com.

Keep track of any medication that you try, the dosage, its effects and side effects, if any. Ask your doctor how long before you should see a change in your symptoms or know that treatment is not working effectively for you.

Remember that if you find a treatment that works, to use it as recommended by your doctor - just because your condition clears does not mean you should stop the therapy.

Take an active role in your treatment by asking questions and keeping your doctor informed of your concerns. Talk to your doctor about your options, especially if you are not seeing improvement after using a particular treatment or if you are having uncomfortable side effects. He or she can adjust your treatment plan or modify your approach to ensure the best possible control of your symptoms. Treatment goals are within your reach.

Next time you experience a worsening of your psoriasis, remember this: Psoriasis does not control you. You control your psoriasis.