



What is Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a common skin disorder, which is characterised by a skin overgrowth that looks like silvery scales, or a sharp bordered red rash. Fingernails can also have a changed appearance. The rate of skin cell growth is too fast – up to 1000 times faster than skin in people without psoriasis. The disease tends to run in families, and can be caused by genetic errors. It affects men and women equally.

Can it be anywhere on the body?

Potentially yes, but the most common areas are the scalp, face, and backs of the wrists, elbows, knees, buttocks and ankles. It may also show up on any site where there is repeated trauma.

Can it be cured?

It can be managed by changing diet and lifestyle so that it isn't noticeable or a problem.

Why do the cells divide so quickly?

It's due to an imbalance in what are called "second messengers" inside the cell. The two involved are cyclic AMP (cAMP) and cyclic GMP (cGMP). The rate of cell division is controlled by a delicate balance between these two. When there's too much cGMP, cells divide too quickly. But, this can be managed by good diet and stress management.



So why do people have too much cGMP?

Digestive problems can lead to incomplete protein breakdown and poor absorption. This increases the amount of breakdown products in the bowel which become toxic, and are called polyamines. Most people with psoriasis have more of these polyamines, and they inhibit the formation of cAMP so that cGMP gets the upper hand and makes too many cells. Chronic candidiasis can also get cAMP and cGMP out of balance.

Anything else?

Toxins from the bowel can overwhelm the liver which has to filter and detox blood from the bowels. Psoriasis will worsen if the liver can't do its job properly. Because of the inflammation, arthritis can be common in people who have psoriasis.



Are there any other causes of psoriasis?

Some drugs can cause or aggravate psoriasis as a side-effect. These include alpha interferon, cortisone, lithium, phenylbutazone, aspirin, progesterone, iodide, nystatin, indomethacin and beta-blockers.

What would a doctor treat me with?

Methotrexate, Cortisone, Cyclosporins and similar pharmaceuticals are commonly prescribed, but they also contribute to overloading the liver.

What sort of changes would a natural therapist tell me to make?

Firstly decrease stress in your life. Many psoriatics have had a highly stressful incident within a month of the first outbreak, and psoriasis always worsens when you have stress.

You need to change something, and if that's difficult, perhaps some counselling, hypnosis or other therapies would help. Change that stressful job into the career you've always wanted. Have a weekly aromatherapy or massage. Go to yoga, tai chi or meditation. Take a holiday and go to the beach. Salt water and sunlight are wonderful for psoriasis. Warmer temperatures help too, but if it's winter, use some heat pads to comfort the worst areas.



Other lifestyle changes include quitting smoking and alcohol. Join a group, try Quitline, AA or nicotine patches. Do whatever works for you to help you to quit both substances.



What about diet?

Diet is really important. There are a lot of foods to go for, and others to really avoid. Because protein breakdown can be a problem, a vegetarian diet is often a bit better as red meat can be harder to digest, but you do still need protein in your diet.

Foods to avoid are:

- * sugar and all sugar products, sweets, lollies etc.
- * red meat and animal fats
- * dairy foods
- * processed and fatty foods
- * white flour products and wheat, as many psoriatics have a gluten allergy
- * hot spicy foods like chilli and pepper
- * coffee and black tea

Foods to include are:

- * fruit and veg, such as avocado, bananas, berries, dates, figs, asparagus, beans, cabbage, carrots, lettuce, cucumber, garlic, parsley, currants, peaches, apricots and grapes. Pineapples and pawpaws have bromelain which is a great digestive enzyme.
- * oily fish 2-3 times per week, plus fish oil and linseed/flaxseed supplements
- * plant proteins – combine nuts and seeds, grains and pulses
- * brown rice, quinoa, buckwheat and millet
- * fresh vegetable juices such as beetroot, cucumber and grape, or apple and carrot



See the other diet sheets for dairy-free and gluten-free diets, as well as vegetarian. Once your condition is managed nicely, you can include a small amount of meat in the diet, but you need to monitor your skin health yourself. If you itch today, ask yourself what you ate yesterday.

Someone told me there are some useful herbs for psoriasis.

Yes there are, but you need to consult a naturopath or herbalist. Don't try to buy herbs and self-medicate. There may be contraindications. You must also tell your doctor about taking herbs.

Golden seal is a good herb for the skin, and St Mary's Thistle will help to support the liver. Herbs that might also be considered are Burdock root, Yellow dock, Sarsparilla, Coleus and several others.



What supplements might be good?

We've already mentioned fish oils. Others include:

- * vitamins A, B, C, D and E. It may be better to substitute beta-carotene for vitamin A, particularly if your liver is overwhelmed.
- * Selenium
- * Calcium, zinc and magnesium
- * a gut repair formula, or slippery elm, to help heal the gut
- * digestive enzymes and hydrochloric acid. The latter helps to break down protein properly, and the former helps you digest your food more efficiently so that there are fewer toxic byproducts. Take the enzymes up to an hour before meals.
- * Quercetin is good because it boosts cAMP levels

Can I put anything on my skin?

You can make up a healthy skin oil with 2 tablespoons of almond oil, into which you put 2 drops of calendula oil and 1 drop of lavender oil. Use good quality fresh oils, and don't leave it in the sun to go off.



It's important to keep the skin well moisturised and as healthy as possible, or infections can start and make the problem worse.