

PSORIASIS

Psoriasis is a very frustrating condition in which the body tends to create skin cells much faster than normal because of an overactive immune system. There is typically a “balance” in the production of skin cells – that is, they’re produced at about the same rate that they’re shed. When a patient has Psoriasis, the skin cells in certain areas are produced so rapidly that they “build up” in thick layers. Also, because they’re produced so fast, the skin cells that are produced don’t have time to mature before being sent to the outer layer of skin. As a result, they don’t have the same strength and resilience as “normal” skin cells, so the Psoriasis-affected areas tend to flake, itch, burn, etc.

There is no known “cause” for Psoriasis, but we do know that there seems to be a genetic quality to it. Many patients report that others in the family have Psoriasis. Even if your parents didn’t have Psoriasis, just remember that certain genetic conditions like Psoriasis can “skip” generations. It can also wait until we’re adults before it comes out.

There is also no “cure” for Psoriasis, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t treatments available to help control it. Your doctor will discuss what treatment plan best fits your situation. There are a number of general recommendations that every patient with Psoriasis should consider:

- 1) Do your best to avoid picking and scratching the Psoriasis-affected areas. It is well-known that Psoriasis tends to worsen with repeated scratching. Even excessive scrubbing in the bath or shower can cause it to flare.
- 2) Psoriasis is not “caused” by poor diet or bad habits. However, **it is definitely “worsened” by excessive fat intake, lack of exercise, poor sleeping habits, stress, and (especially) smoking and/or drinking alcohol.** Eliminating these factors to the best of your ability can make the difference between having mild, easily-controlled Psoriasis vs. having more severe, difficult-to-treat Psoriasis.
- 3) Always follow the instructions provided with any prescription medications. Topical steroids, for example, can cause “thinning of the skin” if used excessively. On the other hand, if used too infrequently, they may not be able to control the redness and scaling. The key is to find that “happy medium” in which you’re able to control the inflammation, but not overuse the medication in a way that causes harm.
- 4) There is a naturally-occurring yeast on everyone’s body which does not “cause” Psoriasis, but it has been shown to “flare” it. Patients who have scalp and face involvement are particularly affected by this yeast, which prefers “oil-prone” areas of the body such as the face, scalp, and ears. Ironically, many patients see the dry flaking on their scalp and mistakenly decrease the frequency that they shampoo. In fact, shampooing typically helps the scaling because it removes the skin oils which in turn create a good environment for the yeast. Many prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) “dandruff” shampoos actually work by killing yeast, so they’re especially helpful.

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5) Although the “cause” of Psoriasis hasn’t yet been found, **every now and then** we come across a patient whose Psoriasis seems to have been triggered by some other health condition or source of inflammation. For example, a patient with a chronically infected tooth might notice that their Psoriasis greatly improves after their dental abscess has been treated once and for all. The point is that it’s wise to consider your overall state of health when looking to improve your Psoriasis. If you have another health issue which has yet to be adequately managed, you should address this with your primary care doctor as it just might help your Psoriasis.

Also **every now and then** we come across a patient whose Psoriasis greatly improves or even “clears” with the addition of a vitamin or nutritional supplement. Imagine having widespread Psoriasis requiring numerous medications and you find that simply starting a vitamin regimen, for example, makes your Psoriasis go into remission.

Although most patients don’t experience significant improvement with vitamins alone, for those that do, it can be life-changing. If you’re interested in trying such an approach, the following vitamins/supplements can all be purchased at your favorite drugstore. This regimen is sometimes referred to as “Barney’s Formula”. Even though these are available OTC, you should discuss this with your primary care doctor just to be sure it’s safe for you to start them. Fish Oil and Ibuprofen, for example, can cause “thinning” of the blood. If your doctor says you shouldn’t take one of the supplements, consider taking the others, as they may still help. Finally, you should take any supplements for at least 3-4 months before determining their effectiveness.

“Barney’s Formula”

1 Multivitamin/Day	1000 IU Vitamin D3/Day
200 MCG Selenium/Day	250 MCG Vitamin B12/Day
400 MCG Folic Acid/Day	2000 MG Flax Seed Oil/Day
2400 MG Fish Oil/Day	400-600 MG Calcium
200 MG Ibuprofen/Day	