

PSORIASIS

Psoriasis is a chronic autoimmune condition characterized by rapid overproduction of skin cells. Millions of people in North America are diagnosed with this non-contagious skin disorder.

Managing stress, eating a diet low in fat and protein, and high in nutrients and clean drinking water are all ways to address the underlying issues of this condition.



Psoriasis sufferers can benefit from a short liquid cleanse that includes, among other things, a healthy dose of nutrient-dense, low glycemic juices and smoothies.

Signs & Symptoms

- Red, raised, rashy areas that are covered in scaly, silvery flakes of skin. It is commonly found on the wrists, elbows, ankles, buttocks and any area where there has been a trauma
- Finger nails can appear discoloured, begin to grow thicker, or have a dimpled look like that of a thimble
- Blisters on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet, known as pustular psoriasis
- Itch that is described as a burning sensation
- Depression
- Psoriasis is not to be confused with eczema which tends to sit flatter to the surface of the skin with edges that are not nearly as well-defined

Causes & Underlying Factors

- Genetic (in about 1/3 of cases)
- Difficulty digesting proteins – this increases toxins in the body known as polyamines
- Poor ecology in the intestines (e.g. overgrowth of “bad” bacteria that crowds out beneficial bacteria), and intestinal permeability (aka leaky gut)
- Poor liver function
- Stress
- Over consumption of saturated animal fats
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Sunburn and other skin irritations can aggravate this condition
- Celiac and Crohn’s disease both have links to psoriasis
- High blood sugar, high cholesterol, and carrying too much weight may have links to psoriasis

Dietary Cleanse for Skin Health

Inflammation is at the core of this skin condition so a dietary regime that keeps inflammatory foods to a minimum is strongly recommended.

Psoriasis sufferers might consider completing a three- to five-day vegetarian whole food cleanse consisting of juiced, raw, and lightly cooked vegetables, clear vegetable broths, and low glycemic smoothies (e.g. more vegetables than fruit). By eliminating animal products and all processed foods, the liver is unburdened and the digestive system is given an opportunity to work optimally.

After such a cleanse it is recommended that gluten be eliminated for three to six months. Studies have shown that avoiding glutenous grains can greatly improve psoriasis. (See sidebar)

Keep a diet and lifestyle journal and track when flare ups occur and when the condition is under control. Careful observation can help determine what the triggers are and what therapeutic recommendations work best.

Glutenous vs Gluten-free Grains

Avoiding gluten – a protein found in grains – can greatly improve psoriasis. If you are eliminating gluten from the diet, you should avoid all varieties of wheat (including spelt, kamut, khorasan, einkorn, and farro/emmer), barley, rye, and triticale (a rye/wheat hybrid). Gluten-free grains, to replace glutenous ones, may include amaranth, buckwheat, millet, quinoa, rice, sorghum, teff, and rice. Oats are naturally gluten free but are often contaminated during growing or processing. Test them and gauge the reaction.

Dietary Recommendations

- Pinpoint and address food sensitivities and intolerances which trigger inflammation and contribute to leaky gut
- Eat a diet rich in nutrient-dense whole foods and low in fat and animal fat
- Increase fibre to increase the elimination of toxins through the bowels
- Essential fatty acids – flax and/or fish oil for anti-inflammatory properties
- Brazil nuts – for selenium
- Clean drinking water
- Avoid foods that spike blood sugar (white rice, white potatoes, refined sugar, refined flours, alcohol), and processed foods as they contribute to inflammation
- Avoid alcohol – taxes the liver which slows down excretion of toxins; contributes to leaky gut
- Avoid or dramatically cut back on animal products (with the exception of cold water fish and fish oil)

Supplement Recommendations

Let your healthcare provider recommend the supplements that are right for you:

- Anti-inflammatories – flax, fish oil (EPA/DHA), curcumin, bromelain (an enzyme)
- Antioxidants – especially vitamin A and zinc. Also vitamins C, and E, selenium, zinc, and CoQ10
- Vitamin D – oral or topical
- Probiotics – to promote beneficial bacteria in the GI tract
- Hydrochloric acid and digestive enzymes – improves digestion in the stomach
- High quality multivitamin
- Chromium – helps regulate blood sugar and is only required in trace amounts
- Goldenseal – aids protein digestion
- Sarsaparilla – encourages excretion of bacterial endotoxins
- Milk thistle – improves liver's ability to process toxins & reduce inflammation

Lifestyle Recommendations

- Phototherapy – exposing the skin to ultraviolet light
- Add heat to affected areas using ultrasound or heating pad
- Identify and manage stress using meditation, prayer, or breathing techniques
- Aerobic activity can also help to reduce stress and detox the body
- Counselling may be explored to deal with unresolved psychological or emotional trauma which may trigger autoimmune reactions like psoriasis
- Natural topical remedies can replace hydrocortisone creams:
 - licorice (glycyrrhiza glabra)
 - chamomile
 - capsaicin
 - Balm of Gilead

NOTE: Always speak to your healthcare provider before taking herbs and supplements as there may be contraindications for you.

Sample Three-Day Meal Plan

DAY 1

BREAKFAST

Fruit smoothie* and chia pudding*

low glycemic whole fruit is blood balancing/high in fibre; cinnamon for blood sugar balance; optional protein (nut butter) and healthy fat (flax oil) to slow the body's uptake of sugar into the cells; chia is high in soluble fibre

LUNCH

Steamed veggies on brown rice with slivered almonds and teriyaki ginger dressing*

cruciferous veggies are nutrient-dense, low glycemic; brown rice is high in fibre

DINNER

Baked wild salmon with steam-sautéed kale and zucchini*

low glycemic, protein rich, nutrient dense; anti-inflammatory omega-3s

DAY 2

BREAKFAST

Nutrient-boosted oatmeal*

blood sugar-balancing fibre-rich oatmeal and chia; protein rich nuts; Omega-3 fatty acid in ground flax; antioxidant-rich berries

LUNCH

Miso soup & japonica rice salad*

soup – beneficial bacteria
salad – fibre-rich, low glycemic whole grains, nutrient-dense veggies

DINNER

Shredded Brussels sprouts* with baked spaghetti squash

Vitamin C-rich Brussels sprouts; essential fatty acids and fibre in nuts; squash high in thiamin

*indicates recipes available at foodhead.ca

DAY 3

BREAKFAST

2 eggs poached, steamed spinach, avocado & steam-sautéed crimini mushrooms

low glycemic, protein-rich, nutrient-dense eggs; spinach is nutrient-dense; mushrooms protect against oxidative damage and are nutrient-dense

LUNCH

Green salad with walnuts, chia seeds, avocado, green onions, and teriyaki ginger dressing*

low glycemic, nutrient-dense, anti-inflammatory, fibre-rich

DINNER

Stuffed peppers* with asparagus spears

Vitamin C-rich peppers; crimini mushrooms, asparagus



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