



What is it?

Psoriasis is a skin condition where the skin cells grow and divide too fast and they end piling up on the surface.

This process is called 'cell turnover' and it normally takes one month but if you have psoriasis it can take less than one week.

Although psoriasis is a condition associated with the skin it actually begins in the immune system, with white blood cells called T cells. T cells help protect the body against infection and disease.

If you have psoriasis your T cells are overactive and set off other immune responses. This leads to swelling and fast cell turnover of skin cells.

Symptoms

You may notice the following symptoms:

- Patches of thick, red skin with silvery scales
- The patches may be itchy or tender
- Common sites for the patches are elbows, knees, ankles, scalp, lower back, face, palms, and soles of the feet, fingernails and toenails.

Why it happens?

- Genetic tendency
- Impaired protein digestion
- Liver dysfunction.

You may notice that at certain times your psoriasis gets worse. Things that can cause the skin to get worse include:

- Infections
- Stress
- Changes in weather that dry the skin
- Certain medicines
- Allergies or food intolerances
- Alcohol consumption
- Excessive intake of animal fat and sugars.



What natural therapies can help?

Zinc – up to 6% of zinc is stored in the skin. Zinc assists epithelial health (the tissue – skin that covers our body) and assists the enzyme involved in essential fatty acid (EFA) metabolism.

Vitamin A is important for maintenance of epithelial tissue, which covers the external surface of our body – our skin.

Evening primrose oil - reduces symptoms, especially itchiness and dryness. Gamma-linolenic acid is an EFA found in evening primrose oil, which is beneficial for skin health.

Fish oil has been found to be beneficial in some individuals with psoriasis, leading to reduced itching, redness and inflammation. Flaxseed oil also helps to reduce inflammation.

Aloe vera – topical use of aloe extract reduces scaling, redness and inflammation.

.....continued over

B group vitamins help support the nervous system, skin and aid proper digestion.

A deficiency or abundance of a single B vitamin may cause problems in the metabolism of other B group vitamins and symptoms such as psoriasis.

Marigold (*calendula officinalis*) is anti-inflammatory and promotes wound healing.

Milk thistle, burdock and yellow dock – help support liver function and the elimination of toxins. Burdock also is specific for inflammatory skin conditions, especially at the dry and scaling phase of psoriasis.

Astragalus stabilises the immune system

Probiotics ensure intestinal bacteria are in balance. Normal flora also helps absorb nutrients. Naturopaths believe if the digestive system isn't in balance this can lead to food sensitivities and decrease our body's ability to heal.

Hydrochloric acid and digestive enzymes such as protease – incomplete digestion of protein can cause allergies, toxic substances and can exacerbate psoriasis.

Did you know?

Skin conditions can be hard to diagnose. Always see your healthcare professional for a proper diagnosis.

Light therapy has been found to be beneficial for people with psoriasis. Natural ultraviolet light from the sun can help to slow down the cell turnover. Just keep in mind that prolonged exposure to the sun can cause skin cancer.

Aerobic exercise – at least 30 minutes daily is great for eliminating toxins, weight loss, stress resistance and skin health.

Foods such as animal fats, sugar and alcohol may aggravate psoriasis. It may be best to limit or avoid these foods and beverages.

Certain fruits such as paw paw, kiwifruit and pineapple contain enzymes that assist digestion. Pineapple particularly contains the protein digesting enzyme called bromelain, which is useful in aiding protein digestion. Eat these about half an hour before meals. Never eat fruit after meals because the fruit sits on top, ferments and causes flatulence, bloating and cramping.

If you suspect any allergies or food intolerances, before embarking on any changes to your diet, always seek the advice from your healthcare practitioner. If you remove ingredients or food groups from your diet, this may result in a nutritionally unbalanced diet, which can lead to further health problems.

THIS INFORMATION IS NOT INTENDED TO TREAT OR DIAGNOSE. ALWAYS CONSULT YOUR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL BEFORE TAKING NUTRITIONAL OR HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS.