

Managing psoriasis flares and itch



What are psoriasis flares?

You may have times when your psoriasis symptoms seem better. At other times, symptoms may get worse. A flare is when psoriasis suddenly gets worse.

Flares may be caused by stressful events, injuries, or other actions. They may also be caused by changes in your mood.



See your healthcare provider about your psoriasis. Your healthcare provider may refer you to a dermatologist. Dermatologists are doctors who are trained to treat skin conditions. You can also find a dermatologist in your area at psoriasis.org.



What are flares like?

The look and feel of affected areas can be different for different people. Let your healthcare team know when and how often you notice these symptoms:

- A sudden **increase in the number of plaques and scales** on the skin
- A sudden **increase in the thickness of plaques**
- An **increase in itching**, **burning sensations**, or other **discomfort**

What causes flares?

Triggers are things that cause flares. People can have many different triggers. It may be difficult to discover what your triggers are. Take notes on the events and conditions around you and your mood whenever you have a flare. You may be able to help prevent flares by knowing what triggers to avoid.



Some common triggers include:	Tips to manage them:
Skin injuries (cuts, scrapes, bug bites, or sunburn)	• Treat skin injuries quickly. • Avoid scratching—it can cause new plaques to form.
Infections, such as strep throat, flu, or common cold	• Consult your healthcare team when you feel sick.
Using or stopping certain medications	• Consult your healthcare team before starting or stopping any medication.
Dry air, such as in winter	• Ask your healthcare provider about skin creams, lotions, or ointments you can use. • Try a humidifier to keep the air in your home moist.

Make note of triggers that worsen your psoriasis and how you manage them. Share these details with your healthcare provider.

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Is your lifestyle making your psoriasis worse?



Stress

Stress can cause flares and increase itch. Let your family and friends know that stress may make your symptoms worse. Tell them how they can help you reduce stress. You might also try to manage stress with exercise, meditation, yoga, or joining a support group. Consider talking to your healthcare provider about other ways to help manage stress.



Smoking

Smoking cigarettes can make your psoriasis symptoms worse. Consider quitting smoking to reduce your psoriasis symptoms.
Visit smokefree.gov for information about quitting smoking.



Alcohol

Excessive alcohol consumption can make your psoriasis symptoms worse. If you do drink alcohol, be moderate. If you have severe psoriasis, you may benefit from eliminating alcohol entirely. Talk to your healthcare team for help with problem drinking.



Obesity/Overweight

Psoriasis outcomes may be linked to obesity/overweight.
People with psoriasis are more likely to have obesity/overweight and this may be linked to worsening of psoriasis symptoms. Losing weight may improve your symptoms and help make your psoriasis easier to treat.
Talk to your healthcare team about a plan to manage your weight.

Tips to manage itching



Scratching may make your psoriasis worse. It may open sores or cause new plaques to form. **Consider these ideas to resist the urge to scratch.**

Do what you can to avoid scratching.

- Keep your nails short.
- Consider soft, smooth clothing that won't irritate your skin.
- Gently put a cold pack wrapped in cloth to numb the itchy area.

Take care when bathing.

- Put Epsom salt or oatmeal in a bath. Soak your body for a short time.
- Take lukewarm showers or baths. Use mild soaps.
- Pat skin dry instead of rubbing. Apply moisturizers immediately after bathing.

Use moisturizing creams or ointments.

- When you feel like scratching, gently massage cream on that area.
- Try wearing socks or gloves to keep lotion on feet and hands.
- Ask your healthcare provider before using over-the-counter creams.

Take your mind off the itch.

- Activities such as painting can keep your mind and your hands busy.
- Listening to new music or watching a movie may also distract you.

Talk to your healthcare team about your symptoms.

- Mention if itching makes you feel stressed or sad, or causes you to lose sleep.
- Ask your healthcare provider about treatment options.



Check out this additional resource for more information about psoriasis:

National Psoriasis Foundation

Visit their main site at:
psoriasis.org

Join their online support group at:
talkpsoriasis.org

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