

The Link Between Stress and Psoriasis

Eileen Bailey - Health Guide

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Numerous studies have linked stress to psoriasis but the reasons behind this connection are not yet understood. Unfortunately, many people get caught in a vicious cycle. Stress causes flare ups or worsens the psoriasis. Then, living with the symptoms of psoriasis increases stress levels which, in turn, worsens the psoriasis. You get the picture, you see how the cycle can continue, making life difficult.

Not everyone with psoriasis has a reaction to stress. Studies show that anywhere from 37 to 78 percent of those with psoriasis are "stress-responders" or indicate that the stress in their life has a direct link to the frequency and severity of their symptoms. But the majority of those who have noticed a relationship between their stress levels and their symptoms list stress as the main cause of exacerbation of psoriasis, topping infection, trauma, medication, diet and weather.

One reason it may be difficult to track the link between stress and psoriasis is the length of time between a stressful event and the increase in symptoms. One study showed an increase in symptoms four weeks after participants went through a stressful time. With such a long time transpiring between a stressful event and symptoms, it can be hard to link them together.

Keeping track of your mood, your stress level and your symptoms on a daily basis, over several months, can help. Use a notebook to write down the date and rate your mood and stress level on a scale of 1 to 10 each day. Briefly describe the severity of your symptoms. Once you have kept track for several months you may begin to see patterns. You may begin to see that symptoms increase, in frequency, in severity or both, shortly after or even several weeks after you have gone through a stressful situation. This information can be shared with your doctor so together you can create a treatment plan that includes monitoring and managing stress, if needed.

If you have noticed a relationship between your psoriasis symptoms and stress, you can use different relaxation techniques to help manage your stress levels. The following are some ways to cope with stress:

Use relaxation techniques on a daily basis

Meditation and yoga, when practiced on a daily basis, help to relieve feelings of stress throughout the day. Deep breathing exercises can be used to help calm you down when in a stressful situation, but taking 10 minutes to practice deep breathing each day can also help you feel more relaxed. If you use light therapy for your psoriasis, you might want to use this time to listen to relaxing music or practice meditation.

Add exercise to your daily routine

Exercise has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety levels which can, in turn, reduce the symptoms of psoriasis.

Set aside time each day for yourself

You might like reading, gardening, having lunch with a friend, getting a massage or taking a walk. Think about the activities you enjoy and plan a time to focus on yourself. For some, this may only be 15 minutes, while others may be able to find an hour or more each day. The important part is to dedicate this time to participating in something you find enjoyable and relaxing every day.

Talk with a therapist

If you find you are not able to manage your stress on your own, it may be helpful to talk with a therapist. Therapists can also work with you on developing stress management techniques you can use daily. This is important because unmanaged and untreated stress can sometimes lead to an anxiety disorder.

Follow your treatment plan

As your psoriasis symptoms increase, your stress levels may too, which may worsen your symptoms. It is important to follow your treatment plan. Your doctor should have worked with you to create a plan of action to help reduce symptoms. Even if you don't see immediate results, continue following the treatment. The better control you have of your symptoms, the less stress you will feel because of the symptoms.

References -

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