



MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

PATIENT GUIDE TO THE HEALTH CARE TEAM

GET TO KNOW YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

If you are a patient with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis, you may have a whole health care team to help you manage your disease. This includes specialists and your primary care provider. Team members work together to develop a complete management plan for you. The team also helps monitor your progress and overall well-being. You are also part of the team, and it is important that you take an active role in managing your care.



You

You are the center and the focus of the care team. Make taking care of yourself and your condition a top priority.



Your family and loved ones

Family and friends provide emotional support and can help you stick to your management plan.



Primary care team

Your main doctor coordinates your care and also provides routine care. He or she helps you stay healthy and prevent other diseases. The team also includes other staff members, such as nurses (read more about this staff below).



Dermatologist

This doctor specializes in treating the skin, hair, and nails. Dermatologists diagnose and treat more than 3,000 different diseases.¹

A **dermatologist** can help:

- Diagnose psoriasis and see how severe it is
- Manage psoriasis to make symptoms better²
- Screen for psoriatic arthritis³



Rheumatologist

This doctor can help diagnose and treat diseases of the joints, muscles, and bones.⁴ He or she helps prevent joint damage and helps you manage psoriatic arthritis, if it develops.

A **rheumatologist** can help:

- Diagnose psoriatic arthritis and see how severe it is³
 - Manage psoriatic arthritis to make symptoms better
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Your team may have other members, too. These team members may be on your team all the time or only as needed.



Nurse Practitioner, Physician Assistant, Nurse

These health care providers may have specialized training in managing psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis. They may see you in the office with your doctor or instead of your doctor.



Social Worker, Case Manager

These team members provide help with treatment, financial aid, and social services.



Representative of an advocacy organization

These organizations educate and help people with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis (such as the National Psoriasis Foundation).



Nutritionist, Dietitian

These team members can guide you by providing information on healthy eating to help with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis and for better overall health.



Ophthalmologist

Your eye doctor monitors your eye health.



Psychologist, Psychiatrist

These team members can help you cope with your psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis and treat mental issues, such as depression.

Inform all members of your health care team that you have psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis. Continue routine care with your primary care provider and specialist because you may be at higher risk for other conditions. Your health care team may be able to help you lower your risk of developing other conditions.

TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE ON THE HEALTH CARE TEAM

Together, you and your care team can manage your psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis to improve both your physical and emotional health.

Work with your health care team

- Understand the role of each team member.
 - Know which team member to contact for questions, concerns, and changes in management.
 - Be honest and open about how you're feeling, both physically and emotionally.
 - Ask questions when you have them.
 - Stay an active member of your health care team.
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KEEP TRACK OF YOUR TREATMENT TEAM

Core Team

Primary Care Physician

Your Primary Care Physician is: _____

Contact information: _____

Dermatologist

Your Dermatologist is: _____

Contact information: _____

Rheumatologist

Your Rheumatologist is: _____

Contact information: _____

Your Team May Also Consist of

Nurse Practitioner (NP), Physician Assistant (PA), Nurse

Your NP/PA/Nurse is: _____

Contact information: _____

Social Worker/Case Manager

Your Social Worker/Case Manager is: _____

Contact information: _____

Nutritionist/Dietitian

Your Nutritionist/Dietitian is: _____

Contact information: _____

Ophthalmologist

Your Ophthalmologist is: _____

Contact information: _____

Psychologist, Psychiatrist

Your Psychologist/Psychiatrist is: _____

Contact information: _____

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR OFFICE VISITS

✔ **Prepare for every visit.**

Keep a journal to help you remember.²

- Record symptoms (when they started, how long they lasted, how they changed over time) and how well you can do everyday tasks.
- Write down questions you want to ask.
- Make a list of medications you take (including supplements and over-the-counter medications) to share with your health care team.

Questions You May Want to Ask²

- What might be causing my symptoms?
- What treatments are available, and which do you recommend for me?
- How long will it take before I see improvement in my symptoms?
- I have other medical conditions. How can I manage these conditions together?

Be sure to ask any other questions you have, too.

✔ **Be organized.** This will help you make the best use of time during your visit.

✔ **Repeat important information.** When your doctor shares important information, repeat it back in your own words to make sure you understand it. Write it down so you don't forget it.

- Ask questions, and ask for explanations if you don't understand the answers.
- Follow up with the office after your visit if you forget to ask something.

✔ **Be open and honest.** Describe the ways psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis affects you, both physically and emotionally.

- If you haven't been following your treatment plan, tell your health care team why. Together, you can make adjustments that work better for you.

✔ **Participate in all decision making.**

- Express your concerns and opinions so you and your specialist can come up with a plan that works best for you.
- Create an effective two-way communication system.

✔ **Consider bringing a family member or friend with you.** They can help you remember important points after the visit and provide emotional support.

PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE

Psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are life-long illnesses. Ongoing management of your disease with your care team is key for successful care.

- ✔ **Continue to keep your treatment team informed of your progress.**
- ✔ **Avoid factors that may worsen your psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis.**
 - Stress
 - Winter weather
 - Smoking
 - Alcohol consumption
 - Too much sun exposure
- ✔ **Ask if you need any vaccinations.**
- ✔ **Inform your care team about any medicines you may currently be taking, and ask questions before taking any new medicines.**
- ✔ **Keep a positive outlook and inform your care team of any shifts in your mood.**
- ✔ **Continue to live a healthy lifestyle, maintain your weight, and exercise regularly.**
- ✔ **Inform your care team if you have any travel plans to find out if any precautions need to be taken before you travel.**
- ✔ **Find out if there are any educational programs you should attend to further your education about your disease.**



REMINDER CHECKLIST

- ✓ Get to know all the members of your health care team and what they can do to help you.
- ✓ Speak with members of your care team regularly.
- ✓ Prepare for every visit.
- ✓ Ask questions about things you don't understand.
- ✓ Discuss your symptoms and any concerns you have.
- ✓ Work with your health care team to make sure your management plan works for you.
- ✓ Remind your other health care providers that you have psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. This information can help them understand your health risks.

References: 1. American Academy of Dermatology. What is a dermatologist? <http://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/about-dermatology/what-is-a-dermatologist>. Accessed June 25, 2015. 2. Mayo Clinic. Diseases and conditions: psoriasis. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/psoriasis/basics/lifestyle-home-remedies/con-20030838?p=1>. Accessed June 24, 2015. 3. Mayo Clinic. Diseases and conditions: psoriatic arthritis. <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/psoriatic-arthritis/basics/definition/con-20015006?p=1>. Accessed June 24, 2015. 4. American College of Rheumatology. What is a rheumatologist? http://www.rheumatology.org/Practice/Clinical/Patients/What_is_a_Rheumatologist_. Updated August 2012. Accessed June 25, 2015.