



# HELPING A LOVED ONE COPE WITH PSORIASIS OR PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS

## A GUIDE FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Caregivers can play an important role as a member of the psoriasis care team, helping support the well-being of people living with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis.

Caregivers may include a spouse, parent, friend, neighbor, and others.

**This brochure provides caregivers with tips to help a loved one manage this disease.**

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

## ABOUT PSORIASIS AND PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS

**Psoriasis** is a common skin condition. It causes itchy, dry, red patches that can be painful,<sup>1</sup> but it is not contagious.<sup>2</sup> Psoriasis is a chronic (long-lasting) disease, but management can make symptoms better.<sup>1</sup>

Some people with psoriasis also get **psoriatic arthritis**. This causes joint pain, stiffness, and swelling. It can affect any part of the body. There is no cure, but management may make symptoms feel better and stop joint damage.<sup>3</sup>



### Encourage your loved one to adopt healthy lifestyle changes

- **Increase healthy eating** (more fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains)<sup>3,4</sup>
- **Increase exercise and physical activity**
  - Join him or her in a new exercise activity or sport. Be sure to check with the doctor before beginning a new exercise program.
  - Exercise can improve overall physical and mental health. It can also lower risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome (a combination of high blood pressure, high insulin levels, and abnormal cholesterol levels), and some cancers.<sup>5</sup>
- **Maintain a healthy weight**
  - People who are overweight or obese have a higher risk of developing psoriasis. Also, people with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis are more likely to gain weight or be obese.<sup>1</sup>
  - Encourage your loved one to talk to his/her doctor about seeing a nutritionist or joining a weight management program, if appropriate.
- **Stop smoking**<sup>4</sup>
  - Smoking may make symptoms of psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis worse.<sup>1</sup>
  - Look for appropriate resources to help your loved one quit smoking. And, if you smoke, consider joining in efforts to stop.
- **Limit alcohol use**
  - It may make your symptoms worse.<sup>4</sup>
  - Encourage your loved one to talk to a doctor about drinking and its effect on psoriasis.
  - Encourage him/her to join an alcohol treatment program such as Alcoholics Anonymous (<http://www.aa.org>), if appropriate.



## Help your loved one perform everyday tasks that might be challenging

- **Help out with shopping**, cooking, cleaning, or anything that your loved one finds difficult.
- **Offer to help apply topical medications** on difficult-to-reach areas. Offer to help with injection of some medications (but consult with health care team first).
- **Find ways to reduce stress**, relax, and rest.<sup>4</sup> Look for relaxing activities that you can do together.



## Support your loved one's mental health

- Coping with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis can be challenging. Patients with these conditions are more likely to become depressed.<sup>1</sup>
- You might notice the symptoms even before your loved one or his/her doctor does. Encourage your loved one to report any symptoms that might be related to depression to the health care team.
- Some symptoms of depression are<sup>6</sup>:
  - Sad, anxious, or “empty” feelings that don’t go away
  - Feelings of hopelessness, guilt, or worthlessness
  - Irritability or restlessness
  - Loss of interest in activities or hobbies
  - Being tired or having less energy
  - Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
  - Sleeping too much or too little
  - Overeating or loss of appetite
  - Thoughts of suicide
  - Aches or pains, headaches, or digestive problems that don’t get better with treatment



## Learn as much as you can about psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis and their treatment

- Listen to your loved one. Encourage him/her to share as much or as little as he/she is comfortable sharing.
- **Offer to go with your loved one** to doctors' appointments or medical tests or procedures.

# WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION OR SUPPORT?



There are several websites that provide information and support.

→ **National Psoriasis Foundation**

<http://www.psoriasis.org>

Get information about psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, learn about research, and find medical professionals. Contact NPF by phone: **800-723-9166**.

→ **TalkPsoriasis.org**

<https://www.inspire.com/groups/talk-psoriasis/>

Join the National Psoriasis Foundation's online community for people affected by psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis.

→ **Mayo Clinic Patient Information**

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions>

Learn about the disease, management, and lifestyle tips.

→ **Psoriatic Arthritis Info**

<http://www.psoriaticarthritisinfo.com>

Take a quiz, get a free health organizer, find a doctor, and learn about psoriatic arthritis.

***You play an important role in the support and care of your loved one.  
Join in healthier lifestyle changes. It's easier to do it together!***

**References:** 1. 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. 2. National Psoriasis Foundation. Psoriasis and Mental Health Issue Brief. <http://www.psoriasis.org/document.doc?id=350>. Accessed June 25, 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. Arthritis Foundation. Psoriatic arthritis self care. <http://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/types/psoriatic-arthritis/self-care.php>. Accessed June 24, 2015. 5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Physical Activity and Health. The benefits of physical activity. <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/health/index.html>. Accessed June 24, 2015. 6. National Institute of Mental Health. Depression. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>. Accessed June 24, 2015.