Psoriasis and stress on family life

Even moderate psoriasis can have a serious impact on families, say Anthony and Jada Edwards of Grayson, Ga., the parents of children ages 5, 6 and 9.

Now 47, Anthony first noticed a strange rash on his elbows and knees about 10 years ago. He figured it was probably psoriasis, but ignored it until it started to worsen.

When he finally sought treatment, a dermatologist prescribed steroid creams and vitamin D-based ointments. These treatments help, as does soaking in hot water to soften the plaques, but the lesions never go away completely.

“It certainly has made me self conscious,” Anthony says. “Other people wouldn’t think twice about going to the beach and pulling their shirt off. At times it can get out of control and painful no matter what you do with it. At those points, you are just wanting some sort of relief from it.”

Anthony’s wife Jada says his psoriasis affects the whole family—from activities with the kids to balancing the household budget.

“This summer in particular [Anthony’s psoriasis] was flaring up pretty badly, and he didn’t want to go to the pool,” she relates. “The kids just couldn’t understand. I can tell when he’s feeling bad and I just hate that he has to put up with it.”

Anthony and Jada also feel the financial pain of coping with his disease. Since losing his job in 2007, Anthony has stayed home with the children and Jada’s job as a pharmacist supports the family. Even with adequate insurance through an HMO, the copayments for Anthony’s medications are as much as $75 for each tube of ointment—just a few weeks’ worth of treatment. To save money, he sometimes goes without the medications.

“If your budget doesn’t allow you to buy [it], you use the cream for a while to get the psoriasis down then you go to a rotation where you only put it on every couple days. But then [the psoriasis] can go from being very mild to tremendously bad in a stretch of 24 hours.”

“I wouldn’t wish this on my worst enemy,” he says. “It’s something you have to live with day in and day out. It does affect your self-esteem. It impacts your budget. And it does impact the people around you and the things you feel comfortable doing with them, and they are aware of that.”