Emotional impact

People with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis change physically and emotionally. Relationships, careers, and self-worth can be strained if your emotions are not addressed. Do you have feelings of stress, anxiety, anger, loneliness or sadness?

It is important to learn how to treat the physical symptoms of psoriatic disease. But learning to recognize and manage your feelings about having psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis is just as important. Your family members, friends and health care providers also need to understand the emotional side of having psoriatic disease and see it as a major part of living with the disease.

Cope with stress

Stress can cause your psoriatic disease to flare for the first time. If you already have psoriatic disease, stress can irritate your current symptoms. If your symptoms flare, that can cause more stress. Stress can negatively affect treatments – slow them down or make them less effective.

Relaxation and stress reduction techniques may help prevent stress from making psoriatic disease symptoms worse. Although decreasing stress may not stop a flare, it may lessen its harmful effects.

Long-term, chronic stress can have damaging results. It can cause an increase in unhealthy behaviors including eating too much or too little, excessive drinking or smoking, sleeping more than necessary or less, and not following treatments. Chronic stress can also increase anxiety and negative thinking that can then cause more stress and more unhealthy behaviors. Because stress can be continuous, it is important to identify your stressors and break the cycle of unhealthy behaviors.

Ways to reduce stress:

- Take part in activities that you enjoy
- Take care of yourself by changing unhealthy lifestyle habits
- Say “No” to new responsibilities that may cause stress
- Try meditation and/or relaxation methods
- Try exercise, yoga or tai chi

Stop negative thoughts

Negative thinking can lower your self-esteem and affect your daily life and relationships. Learn to identify negative thoughts and stop them. Negative thought patterns include:

- **Overgeneralizing** is making too much of an unpleasant event that only happened once. An example is if you once heard rude comments about your psoriasis while eating out, and now you think that this will happen every time you go to a restaurant.

- **Catastrophic thinking** is always thinking of the worst-case scenario. An example is believing if you go to the hairdresser, they will refuse to cut your hair because they think you look disgusting.

- **Personalizing** is feeling upset about something that never happened. An example is feeling upset because no one sat next to you on the bus due to psoriasis on your skin.
• **Ignoring the positive** is focusing only on the negative aspects of a situation or your appearance. An example is if someone pays you a compliment but you think they are only feeling sorry for you.

### Recognize the signs of depression

Depression can have an impact on your overall quality of life. It affects your body, mood and thoughts. Symptoms of anxiety and depression can change from day to day. Some symptoms of depression include:

- Weakness, fatigue or lack of energy
- Eating more or eating less
- Sleeping more or sleeping less
- Feelings of sadness, loneliness or isolation
- Anxiety
- Hopelessness or helplessness
- Thoughts of suicide

If you are struggling to take control of your psoriatic disease or have symptoms of depression, reach out to someone you trust. This can be a friend, family member or mentor. Or consider making an appointment with a mental health care provider.

### Regain your self-esteem and live your healthiest life

Although living with psoriatic disease can be challenging, using coping strategies and effectively managing your stress can help improve your quality of life.

**Ways to cope:**

- Find and work with a health care provider you trust
- Follow your treatment regimen or seek better options
- Learn about psoriatic disease and treatments
- Accept your feelings
- Identify and reduce stressors
- Manage your expectations
- Turn negative thoughts into positive thoughts
- Talk with friends, family or a mentor for support
- Find a mental health care provider

### Tips and resources

There are positive ways to respond if people stare or say something rude:

- Nod or smile at the person to show that you are aware of them.
- Make quick effective comments, such as, “I have psoriasis. Don’t worry. It isn’t contagious.”
- Try to bring in humor to relax both yourself and others.

**For more information**

To locate a mental health care provider:

- American Psychological Association: [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org)
- American Institute of Stress: [www.stress.org](http://www.stress.org)

To connect with someone else who has experienced psoriatic disease for support and encouragement:

- Psoriasis One-to-One peer support program: [www.psoriasis.org/one-to-one](http://www.psoriasis.org/one-to-one)