Natural supplements (also called dietary supplements) and products, including orals and topicals, can often be found over-the-counter (OTC). They come in various forms and in different strengths or concentrations.

We recommend speaking with your health care provider before adding natural supplements or products to your treatment plan, especially if you are pregnant or nursing. (Extra care should also be taken with children or the elderly.) This will help you decide whether they are safe and appropriate for you and at what dosage.

What should I know about using dietary supplements for my psoriatic disease?

The link between psoriatic disease and the use of vitamins or supplements is not yet understood. However, some people find that adding vitamins and supplements into their diets helps with their psoriatic symptoms. Supplements include extracts or concentrates and are available in tablets, capsules, liquids and powders.

It is important to keep in mind that although many herbs and supplements are natural, this does not mean that they are safe. The quality, safety and effectiveness of these products are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

What are some natural oral products?

Evening primrose oil is a supplement that can decrease inflammation. There are also studies that show evening primrose oil improves psoriasis symptoms by stopping skin cell proliferation and growth.

Key points about using dietary supplements

- Supplements are not meant to diagnose, treat, prevent or cure any disease, including psoriatic disease. And they should never replace your prescribed treatment plan from your health care provider.
- Tell your health care provider before taking any supplements to ensure that they are safe to use with your other treatments.
- The purity, quality, strength and ingredients of supplements can differ between different brands. These factors can also be different between product lot numbers within the same brand.
- If you experience side effects or think that supplements are worsening your symptoms, stop taking them and tell your health care provider as soon as possible.
**Milk thistle** has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. There have been no specific studies investigating the effects of milk thistle on psoriasis. But studies do show that the harmful liver side effects from methotrexate can be countered by taking milk thistle.

**Omega-3 fatty acids** have been shown to benefit the immune system, improve symptoms of psoriatic disease, lower blood pressure and triglyceride levels, prevent heart disease or stroke and help reduce inflammation.

**Turmeric and curcumin** (the active ingredient in turmeric) have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects. Studies show that curcumin may be effective in treating nail psoriasis and may also improve psoriasis symptoms and psoriatic arthritis flares.

**Vitamin D** can change the way that cells grow and may be able to slow cell growth. However, evidence for use of vitamin D supplements in psoriasis is limited. The safest sources of vitamin D are through foods, such as cod liver oil, salmon, mackerel, tuna, milk, cheese, cereals and egg yolk and juices fortified with vitamin D.

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### What are some natural topical products?

We always recommend performing a patch-test when using a topical for the first time. This is done by applying some of the product on a small area of skin not affected by psoriasis to see how your skin reacts.

**Aloe vera** gel or cream can be applied up to 3 times per day to help reduce redness and scaling.

**Apple cider vinegar** is reported by many people to be able to relieve itch and improve symptoms. It should be diluted with water at a 1:1 ratio, patch-tested and applied if appropriate. Be sure to rinse your skin after the solution has dried to prevent irritation. The diluted solution should not be applied on cracked or bleeding skin, as it can cause a burning sensation.

**Capsaicin** is an ingredient in chili peppers. It can be found in some creams and ointments to reduce pain, inflammation, redness and scaling. But its long-term benefits and safety are unknown.

**Coconut oil**, especially virgin coconut oil, has been shown to reduce pain and inflammation.

**Dead Sea salts** can be added to a warm bath. Soak for approximately 15 minutes to help soften and remove scales and lessen itching. Be sure to apply a moisturizer after a soak with salts.

**Mahonia aquifolium**, or Oregon grape extract, comes in a cream or ointment and has been shown to have anti-proliferative, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory effects. Studies have also shown that it is safe and effective in treating mild to moderate psoriasis.

**Oats** can be applied topically as a paste or added to a bath to relieve itchiness and reduce redness.

**Tea tree oil** is available as an essential oil or found in shampoos because it is helpful in managing scalp psoriasis. If you are using the essential oil form of tea tree oil, dilute 2 to 3 drops with approximately 1 teaspoon of a oil (such as olive, grapeseed, coconut or avocado oil) before before applying it directly onto your skin. A carrier oil is a vegetable oil, such as olive, grapeseed, coconut or avocado.

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**What should I do next?**

Contact our Patient Navigation Center to find providers, prepare for appointments, discuss treatments and get help with accessing treatments (find contact information below).