Types of products

There are many types of OTC products available to help manage psoriasis symptoms. Some are used for specific areas of the body. They can also be used for a specific purpose such as moisturizing, reducing itch or removing scales.

- Moisturizers and bath solutions can be helpful to reduce flaking and itching, and may help in speeding up the healing of affected areas.
- Scale lifters (also called “keratolytics”) are products that help soften, loosen and remove dead skin cells. Removing dead skin cells is important so that other treatments can penetrate the top layers of skin.

Products can contain salicylic acid or tar in different concentrations or strengths. Higher concentrations are stronger and may cause irritation. Speak with your health care provider if you have concerns or questions about an OTC product.

What should I look for in OTC products?

There are 2 ingredients that may be helpful at managing the symptoms of psoriasis. You should look for these ingredients in OTC products:

- Salicylic [SA-luh-si-lik] acid works as a scale lifter and can help to soften and remove scales or plaques. This ingredient can be found in products such as creams, gels, lotions, ointments, shampoos and soaps.
- Tar made from wood or coal works to slow skin cell growth and reduce inflammation, itching and scaling. This ingredient can be found in shampoos or as preparations that can be applied to plaques or added to baths. Coal tar has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as an active ingredient for the treatment of psoriasis.

Over-the-Counter Products

There are over-the-counter (also called “OTC”) products that can help reduce symptoms such as itching and dry skin. We encourage you to learn about OTC products and speak with your health care provider about whether or not they may be appropriate to use as part of your treatment plan.

This fact sheet contains information about OTC products that may be useful in managing psoriasis symptoms. Most are available at major drugstores and supermarkets.
How do I use OTC products for specific areas?

The **genital area** is sensitive and can be easily irritated. OTC products should be used cautiously for managing genital psoriasis. Look for moisturizers without fragrance or perfume. Do not apply products that are highly concentrated such as tar products.

OTC products can help manage the symptoms of psoriasis on the **hands and feet**. Some health care providers may recommend occlusion (covering) to increase the effects of topical products for areas such as the hands and feet. This method of applying a topical and covering it should only be used when directed by your health care provider.

**Nail** psoriasis can be difficult to treat. This is because it affects the nail when it is being formed. Topical treatments are generally not able to reach the part where the nail is formed. Prescription treatments may be the most effective option for treating nail psoriasis. But OTC products that are meant for the hands and cuticles may help with moisturizing. You should also keep your nails trimmed short to reduce injury and prevent lifting of the nail from the nailbed.

OTC products can also help manage symptoms of **scalp psoriasis**. Some OTC shampoos, conditioners and topicals help to soften and remove scales, reduce itch and moisturize the skin.

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**Seal of Recognition products**

NPF’s Seal of Recognition can be found on OTC products that are proven safe and effective for managing psoriasis symptoms.

Medical experts in dermatology (the field of medicine that specializes in skin diseases) and psoriasis evaluate and test products for our Seal of Recognition program.

These products must show that they are:

- Safe and effective in managing psoriasis symptoms by hydrating the skin, reducing redness or itch, managing plaques and other symptoms
- Non-irritating and contain no chemicals known to cause irritation to psoriasis
- Not harmful
- Able to be used in combination with prescription treatments for psoriasis

For a list of products that carry the Seal of Recognition, visit: [psoriasis.org/seal/product-directory](http://psoriasis.org/seal/product-directory).

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**What should I do next?**

- Speak with your health care provider about what OTC products may be appropriate for you.
- Contact our Patient Navigation Center to find providers, prepare for appointments, discuss treatments and get help with accessing treatments (find contact information below).

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National Psoriasis Foundation educational materials are medically reviewed and are not intended to replace the counsel of a physician. The Foundation does not endorse any medications, products or treatments for psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis and advises you to consult a physician before initiating any treatment.

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