

Psoriasis: Complementary/Alternative Medicine

Sharply bordered reddened rash or plaques covered with overlapping silvery scales

Characteristic locations: the scalp, the backside of the wrists, elbows, knees, buttocks, and ankles; and sites of repeated trauma

Family history in fifty percent of cases

Nail involvement results in characteristic "oil drop" stippling (thimble-like appearance) Possible arthritis

QUICK REVIEW

Psoriasis is caused by a pileup of skin cells that have replicated too rapidly. The basic defect is an imbalance in the cellular control compounds cyclic AMP and cyclic GMP. Incomplete protein digestion, bowel toxemia, and impaired liver function are linked to psoriasis.

Reducing the intake of arachidonic acid, a fat found exclusively in animal foods, while increasing the intake of omega-3 fatty acids is a primary nutritional recommendation.

Several orally administered natural medicines have been shown to be effective in treating psoriasis: omega-3 fatty acids, active vitamin D, fumaric acid, silymarin, and sarsaparilla.

- Sunlight (ultraviolet light) is extremely beneficial for individuals with psoriasis.

Topical treatments with preparations containing glycyrrhetic acid from licorice, chamomile extracts, and capsaicin from cayenne pepper can be helpful.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

Despite the complexity of this disease, the therapeutic approach is fairly straightforward.

Diet

Limit consumption of sugar, meat, animal fats, and alcohol. Increase intake of fiber and cold-water fish. Eliminate sources of gluten.

Nutritional Supplements

- High-potency multiple vitamin and mineral formula
- Flaxseed oil: 1 tbsp per day
- Vitamin A: 50,000 IU per day (not to be used by pregnant or women at risk for pregnancy)
- Vitamin E: 400 IU per day
- Chromium: 400 mcg per day • Selenium: 200 mcg per day • Zinc: 30 mg per day
- Water-soluble fiber (psyllium, pectin, guar gum, etc.): 5 g at bedtime

Botanical Medicines

- Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) The dosage should be based on berberine content. As there is a wide range of quality in goldenseal preparations, standardized extracts are preferred. Take one of the following three times per day:

Dried root or as infusion (tea): 2-4 g Fluid extract (1:1): 2-4 ml (1/2-1 tsp) Solid (powdered dry) extract (4:1 or 8-12% alkaloid content): 250-500 mg

- Sarsaparilla species (one of the following three times per day):

Dried root or by decoction: 1-4 g Liquid extract (1:1): 8-16 ml (2-4 tsp) Solid extract (4:1): 250-500 mg

- Silymarin (from *Silybum marianum*): 70-210 mg three times per day

Psychological Factors

Evaluate stress levels and utilize stress reduction techniques as appropriate.

Physical Medicines

- Ultrasound: 42--45°C for twenty minutes, three times per week

- UVB: 295-305 nm, 2 mw/cm² for three minutes, three times per week

Topical Treatment

Preparations that contain one or more of the ingredients described above. Apply to affected areas of the skin two to three times per day.