



Beyond
Expectations

Psoriasis Carer Guide

How to help a loved one living with the condition

janssen  Immunology

PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES OF *Johnson & Johnson*



Introduction

The impact of psoriasis can be multi-faceted, affecting patients physically, mentally and emotionally.¹⁻³ The significant impact of the condition means that your loved ones with psoriasis will likely need support from you. This support can include simply knowing more about the condition, accompanying them to doctor's appointments or helping them with their medication.

Though it's greatly appreciated by those who struggle with the condition, supporting someone with psoriasis can be tough. This guide aims to provide practical information on psoriasis and its impact, as well as advice on how best to support a loved one with the condition.



What is psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a chronic, painful, disfiguring and disabling disease that can appear on any part of the body. There are different types of psoriasis.²⁻³ The most common form is plaque psoriasis, which usually leads to patches of thick red or inflamed skin covered with silvery scales known as plaques.⁴

Psoriasis is a chronic condition, caused by a problem in the body's immune system, where certain immune cells (T-cells) are triggered and become overactive. These cells start producing inflammatory chemicals that in turn lead to the rapid growth of skin cells, causing plaques to form.⁵ For people with psoriasis some days are better than others. A flare-up of psoriasis can be triggered by many different things, including stress, hormonal changes and injuries to the skin.⁵

Psoriasis is not contagious. It is not something you can 'catch' or that others can catch from you.³

Psoriasis does not just affect the skin, it can affect other parts of the body and is closely linked with other conditions such as:⁶⁻¹⁰

- Psoriatic arthritis, a condition affecting the joints and muscles
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD)
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Cancer
- Osteoporosis
- Metabolic syndrome

Just as importantly, people with psoriasis often struggle with depression and anxiety.¹ You can find out more about the impact of psoriasis in the **Mental Health And Psoriasis guide**.

There is no cure for psoriasis but the good news is that great strides have been made in psoriasis treatment over the last 20 years and it is now one of the most treatable conditions affecting the immune system.¹¹⁻¹⁵

There are three main groups of treatment and a doctor will decide which to choose based on different factors such as the severity of the psoriasis.^{2,16}

Topical treatments

applied to skin, these are available via the pharmacy ('over the counter') or prescribed by a doctor



**Creams,
ointment
and gels**

Phototherapy

natural ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun and controlled delivery or artificial UV light are administered by a doctor



UV therapy

Systemic treatment

prescribed by a doctor, commonly taken as a tablet or given in hospital via drip or injected at home



Orals



Injectables

- Biologics
- Other

You can take a look at the **Psoriasis Treatment guide** for more detailed information on the different treatments available.



Five ways you can help¹⁷

1 Get informed about the condition

One of the most helpful things you can do is educate yourself about psoriasis and its effects. Commit to learning more about the condition, or listen if your loved one offers to tell you about it themselves. You can also read the guides in this series to find out more

2 Listen to your loved one's concerns

Help them feel safe talking about how psoriasis affects them. While some people might want to hear advice on things they can do to feel better, remember that others will just want to express their feelings without fear of judgement

3 Support stress management

Stress can make psoriasis symptoms worse for some people with the condition. Talk to your loved one about ways they can relax and reduce the impact of stress in their life. There may be things you can do to help reduce their stress: ask them how you can help

4 Offer to help them prepare for doctors' appointments and/or offer to attend with them

For some people, doctors' appointments can be daunting and they might find it difficult to explain how they feel and what support they need. Gently offer to support your loved one with this

5 Encourage your loved one to seek professional mental health support if they're feeling depressed or anxious

Sadly, many people with psoriasis suffer from depression and anxiety, which may be partly due to the social exclusion, discrimination and stigma, which is sometimes associated with the condition.² It's vital your loved one seeks professional help if their mental health is affected. You can find out more in the [Mental Health and Psoriasis guide](#)



Psoriasis and intimacy

Psoriasis can sometimes make people with the condition want to avoid socialising with friends and family or being intimate with a partner. This might be because they feel embarrassed about their skin or perhaps because a flare-up has left them feeling unwell.

It's important not to pressurise your loved one. Try to understand that they're not rejecting you and instead offer to listen to their worries and support them in socialising in a way they feel comfortable and confident. You might like to suggest different ways of spending time together that might work better if they are feeling unwell or embarrassed. This might include spending time one-on-one rather than in a group.

For more information on this topic, and in particular the impact of psoriasis on romantic relationships see the [Psoriasis and Relationships guide](#).



Helping your loved one prepare for and attend doctor appointments

You may like to offer to help your friend or family member prepare for their appointments with their doctor. It might be as simple as talking about the appointment with them before they go, helping them make notes of things to discuss with their doctor or offering to attend the appointment with them. Be guided by what your friend or relative needs.

If you're helping your loved one prepare for an appointment you may like to discuss the following with them:

- Keeping a diary of flare-ups or any changes to their symptoms
- Noting how they're getting on with treatment: is it still working well, do they need to discuss a change, any possible side effects
- Discussing whether they are experiencing any other health problems
- Considering mental health, is their mood affected by the psoriasis at the moment?

If appropriate, you may also offer to go the appointment with your friend or family member, either as moral support, to take notes, or help explain some of their thoughts and feelings. Be guided by your loved one's needs and respect their need for privacy if they would prefer to attend the appointment on their own.



Helping with treatment

Psoriasis is now among the most effectively-treated immune-mediated inflammatory diseases, and psoriasis patients can expect to achieve over 90% skin clearance with the current treatment options available.¹⁸ However, for the treatments to work properly they need to be taken exactly as recommended by the doctor.

Your loved one may want support with treatment. For example, this could include helping them remember to take the medication. It is important that you discuss this thoroughly with them and their doctor so you can understand how you can help safely.

Some treatments, such as injectable medicines, require training on safe administration. If someone with psoriasis is prescribed one of these medicines they will be carefully shown how to administer the treatment. If they require help, this must be discussed with their doctor and you must feel completely comfortable on the process and requirements if you agree to take this on. It's completely acceptable to ask for more information before deciding if it is something you can help with – and if you decide you don't feel equipped or that you're the wrong person to take this on, be honest and explain how you feel. Having an open conversation with your loved one and their doctor is the best way forward.¹⁹





Getting support

It can be hard supporting someone living with psoriasis and you may find that you need support as well. It's a good idea to ask for support from your network of friends and family. There may be times where you can't provide the support your loved one needs, or you yourself may need someone to talk to. Discuss how you'll manage this together and agree who you can both reach out to in these circumstances.

To receive additional support for you and your loved one, try reaching out to a local support organisation.

Further information

- [EUROPSO](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. Your mental health is as important as your physical health and, with the right support and treatment, it can be improved and managed. Don't give up and remember to ask for help if you need it.

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If you're looking for more info or a local patient group to connect to please visit: euro-psy.org.



We hope you found this guide useful.
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