

Taking Action

You don't have to tolerate the symptoms of psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis in silence. Help is available. But it's up to you to take responsibility for your condition by learning all you can and being an advocate for yourself.

With an increased understanding, you can cope more successfully, work more effectively with your doctor, and find out which treatment options may be suitable for you.

How do I get started?

The first step is to get help. Make an appointment to see your general practitioner or dermatologist who can provide a diagnosis and the best possible treatment options for you.

You will also want to get up to speed on understanding psoriasis by learning as much as you can. There are a number of excellent organisations with information about the disease

How can I get the most out of my doctor's visits?

There are several things you can do to ensure you get the most out of your doctors'™ visits. This is especially important given that your doctor often has limited time. Remember, your relationship with your doctor is an ongoing partnership and good communication makes all the difference. Here are some tips:

- **Make a list of questions** and/or issues to discuss with your doctor and bring it along to the visit.

Topics to discuss with your doctor:

- How do you feel about your condition (e.g. feelings of depression or isolation)
 - Emotional well being
 - Effectiveness of current treatments
 - Treatment side effects
 - Questions about additional treatment options, including benefits and risks of newer therapies
 - Treatments which best suit your lifestyle
 - Life style habits that may affect psoriasis (e.g. stress, smoking)
 - Support resources
 - What to expect between now and your next visit
 - Bring a list of your current medications, including vitamins and supplements
 - Utilise psoriasis symptom diary where appropriate.
- **Keep a diary** in between visits that tracks symptoms and effectiveness of treatment, as well as other things that seem to make your psoriasis better or worse. Bring this diary to the visit as well so that you can refer to it as needed.

Topics to explore in your psoriasis symptom diary:

- Overall perceptions of your condition today
 - Psoriasis flares (including extent and severity of the flare)
 - Events leading up to the flare (i.e. potential triggers)
 - Pain in joints (including time, duration and activities it follows)
 - Treatment related side effects
- Stay in synch by making sure that you are comfortable with the treatment plan and that you are getting the most out of it.

How can I learn to cope with psoriasis?



Learning to recognise and manage your feelings about psoriasis can be just as important as treating the physical symptoms. Here are a few helpful things to keep in mind:

- **Acknowledge your feelings** — It is natural to experience feelings of sadness, anger and frustration when dealing with psoriasis
- **Manage stress** — Stress is a proven trigger in some people. It can cause psoriasis to flare up for the first time or aggravate existing psoriasis. Relaxation and stress reduction can help, and can give you a feeling of control.
- **Don't give up** — Psoriasis is chronic and can be unpredictable, however it can be managed. Don't give up on psoriasis control!
- **Seek support** — You may want to ask for support and encouragement from family members and friends. In addition, there are a number of excellent resources to help you cope with the **emotional aspects of psoriasis**. For a list of useful organisations, see the . **Resources & Support section**