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**The Complete Guide to Eczema and Psoriasis
– Prevention, Treatment and Remedies**

By Robert Ashe

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	2
1. Eczema and Psoriasis – An Introduction	8
Causes	8
2. Specific Characteristics of Eczema and Psoriasis	10
<i>Treatment Options.....</i>	<i>10</i>
3. Eczema - An Overview	12
What is Eczema?	15
Who Develops Eczema?	15
Cause	16
Treatment	16
4. Types of Eczema	17
<i>Atopic eczema.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Infantile Seborrhoeic Eczema.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Irritant Contact Dermatitis</i>	<i>18</i>
5. Signs and Symptoms of a Typical Eczema	19
Common Signs and Symptoms of Eczema.....	19
6. What is the Real Cause of Eczema?	21
7. Risk Factors for Eczema.....	23
8. Who Gets Eczema?	25
9. Eczema in Children	27
10. Recent Research on Eczema.....	29
11. How to Diagnose Eczema	31
12. Tips to Avoid Eczema	34

A Few Tips to Avoid Eczema	34
13. Treatment Options for Eczema	38
14. Natural Remedies to Prevent and Sooth Eczema.....	42
Prevention.....	42
<i>Soothing Eczema or Dermatitis.....</i>	42
<i>Acupuncture and Meditation</i>	44
<i>Massage and Aromatherapy.....</i>	44
<i>Herbal therapy.....</i>	44
<i>Other Care</i>	45
The Result.....	45
15. Treating Eczema with Herbs.....	46
16. Treating Eczema with Acupuncture.....	48
17. Treating Eczema with Vitamins and Supplements	50
18. Treating Eczema with Traditional Chinese Medicine	52
19. The Impact of Eczema.....	54
20. Eczema and Diet.....	56
21. Psoriasis - An Overview.....	58
Types of Psoriasis	58
Psoriasis Grading	60
<i>Psoriasis Vs Quality of life.....</i>	60
22. What is Psoriasis?.....	61
23. Types of Psoriasis.....	64
<i>Plaque Psoriasis</i>	64
<i>Guttate Psoriasis</i>	64
<i>Pustular Psoriasis</i>	65
<i>Inverse Psoriasis</i>	65
<i>Erythrodermic or Exfoliative Psoriasis</i>	65

<i>Seborrhoeic psoriasis</i>	66
<i>Nail psoriasis</i>	66
<i>Psoriatic arthritis</i>	67
24. What is the Real Cause of Psoriasis?	68
Genetic causes.....	68
Stress Triggers.....	68
Skin injury	69
Infection Triggers.....	69
25. Risk Factors for Psoriasis	71
26. Who Gets Psoriasis?	73
27. Psoriasis in Children	75
28. How to Diagnosis Psoriasis	78
29. Some Tips to Reduce Psoriasis Events	81
30. Treatment Options for Psoriasis	84
31. Natural Remedies to Reduce the Effects	89
<i>Yoga</i>	89
<i>Massage</i>	90
<i>Meditation</i>	90
<i>Sun and water therapy</i>	91
<i>Balneotherapy</i>	91
<i>Climatotherapy</i>	92
<i>Ayurvedic medicine</i>	92
<i>Chinese medicine</i>	92
<i>Self-Care with Natural products</i>	93
<i>Exercise</i>	93
32. The Impact of Psoriasis	94
33. Psoriasis and Diet	96
Helpful Foods	96

Foods to Avoid	97
34. Living with Psoriasis.....	99
Tackling Psoriasis.....	99
<i>Artificial and Temporary Camouflage.....</i>	<i>100</i>
35. Winter Care of Psoriasis	102

Part-I: Introduction

1. Eczema and Psoriasis – An Introduction

Eczema and Psoriasis are allergic skin conditions that display itchy, scaly and red skin. These inflammatory skin conditions can occur at any time of your life. Often, eczema and psoriasis begin in your childhood and continue throughout your growing years and adult life too. Both eczema and psoriasis have minor differences in their symptoms and characteristics.

They both result in thickening of the skin due to intense and persistent scratching. The rashes often appear as painful swellings with matter oozing from them. Sometimes, the cracks bleed and there is a burning sensation on the scales when the sufferer sweats. They manifest at nighttime and you start scratching your skin like crazy.

Causes

Eczema and psoriasis are allergic conditions that can develop into serious problems. They may result from allergies from soaps, perfumes, laundry detergents, chemicals, food allergens, certain metals as in metal jewelry, and animal dander.

Psoriasis is often the result of external allergies, while eczema is due to internal allergies - like food allergies. Common food allergens are eggs, certain fruits including strawberries, seafood, nuts, and wheat.

Excessive intake of sugary and starchy foods can cause eczema and psoriasis by weakening your immune system. Processed and refined

foods are the main cause for toxic deposits in your body that disrupt the body immune system. Your body tries to excrete the metabolites and toxic substances through the skin. These, in turn, cause itchiness and rashes on your skin.

2. Specific Characteristics of Eczema and Psoriasis

Eczema is a skin allergy that is more intense at night. This skin disorder occurs most frequently in people suffering from hay fever and asthma.

Unhealthy eating habits may cause eczema.

Sometimes, eczema eruptions increase around ten days before menstrual flow. This is due to increased progesterone levels. This eczema then decrease during the period when the progesterone level falls.

Psoriasis affects around 2% of all Americans. This skin disorder affects the skin, joints, nails, and eyes. Small areas of your skin could develop red scales (plaques) in many different shapes and sizes, and with varying degrees of intensity.

Trauma, sinusitis and bacterial infections often cause psoriasis. Additionally, your psoriasis condition will worsens in the winter months due to the cold and dry weather while the hot and humid conditions of summer are better for most sufferers.

Treatment Options

Psoriasis is often due to a deficiency of essential vitamins like magnesium and zinc.

There is no permanent cure for eczema and psoriasis. You have to change your dietary habits and stay away from various allergic substances.

Detoxification through saunas, exercises that cause you to sweat, liver and kidney cleansing, bowel cleansing and reduction of stress can bring marked improvements and much-wanted relief too.

Meditating and spending time in isolation can calm your nerves and body. This may reduce the incidence of eczema and psoriasis.

Part-II: Understanding Eczema

3. Eczema - An Overview

Eczema is a skin inflammation that causes itchy, swollen, and red skin. This condition does not have any serious or life-threatening implications but can make you feel self-conscious and uncomfortable.

Eczema, like dermatitis, is not contagious.

There are many different kinds of eczema or dermatitis, like Neuro dermatitis, Contact dermatitis, Stasis dermatitis, Seborrhoeic dermatitis, Perioral dermatitis and Atopic dermatitis.

Although all types of eczema display the most common symptoms of itching and swelling of skin, they each have their own specific signs and symptoms.

Common causes include allergies, irritants, stress and genetic factors.

Neurodermatitis occurs due to tight and gripping dresses and rubbing of clothing across your skin. This is most common about your wrists, ankles and at the back of the neck. Application of Hydrocortisone lotions and creams, wet compresses, and sedatives can provide relief.

Contact dermatitis occurs due to irritants like soaps, detergents and other cleaners. Allergens like metals, rubber, cosmetics, perfumes and certain weeds (like poison ivy) also cause eczema.

Allergens cause eczema instantly while the effects of irritants may only appear after a while.

Once you are able to identify the irritant or allergen, avoid it to be free from eczema. Creams can sometimes help you get over this eczema within a month.

Stasis dermatitis is due to fluid accumulation in tissues underneath your skin, especially on your legs.

Seborrhoeic dermatitis is a seasonal affliction due to prevailing weather.

Perioral dermatitis occurs near the nose or mouth. It is often due to moisturizers, dental products and other make-up products.

Atopic dermatitis is due to allergies and is common in people with asthma and hay fever.

Stress is a common cause for most types of eczema.

You can help to prevent some occurrences of eczema in these ways:

Warm water baths and avoiding daily bathing can retain body moisture.

Use mild soaps and avoid antibacterial soaps.

Dry your body thoroughly with a towel.

Use moisturizing cream or lotion while your skin is damp.

Try to cover itchy areas with dressings & avoid scratching.

Wear smooth clothes to avoid irritation.

Dress comfortably to avoid sweating.

What is Eczema?

Eczema is a Greek word meaning 'boiling over'. Eczema is the same as dermatitis. Your skin normally prevents loss of water from your body. However, eczema on your skin does not allow this to happen. Your skin becomes dry and cracked due to lack of sufficient moisture. This causes itchiness. The scaly skin also allows in allergens and bacteria, causing various allergic reactions and resulting in worsening of eczema.

Eczema is noninfectious inflammation of skin and the most common type is Atopic dermatitis. Different irritative factors cause pathological changes in your skin or dermis layer. These changes manifest as crusts, papules, vesicles, and acute edema. These cause itchiness, scaling, and thickening of your skin. In severe cases, skin forms plaques with patches of raised skin with watery exudates too. These look ugly and could develop infection too.

Who Develops Eczema?

Eczema affects children and infants the most with slight affliction in adults too. Although 1% to 2% of adults have eczema, it is a huge 20% in children and infants. Babies have a greater incidence on their faces while young children develop eczema on elbows, inner wrists, ankles, and knees. Some have eczema eruptions on stomach and limbs too.

Sometimes, eczema improves with age. For some others, it is a recurring and lifelong disorder. Again, eczema does not occur with the same severity. Some suffer from mild afflictions while some have severe eruptions and itchiness.

Cause

The cause for Atopic eczema is your genes. If there is a history of asthma and hay fever in your family, you could develop Atopic eczema. This is due to the presence of certain allergens in the air. Your body is unable to cope with certain scents or smells in the air. People with Atopic eczema are often allergic to perfumes and detergents.

Treatment

There is no sure cure for eczema. Regular treatment can help control your flare-ups and ease your itchiness. Treatment includes application of steroid creams, ointments, and moisturizers. Young children suffering from eczema can benefit through regular application of such remedies. They may not have eczema by the time they are in their teens.

4. Types of Eczema

Eczema is a skin disease causing drying of skin, irritation, itchiness, and cracking of skin too. Sometimes, it causes bleeding through skin eruptions.

There are four main types of Eczema in Allergic Contact Dermatitis

Atopic Eczema

Infantile Seborrheic Eczema

Irritant Contact Dermatitis

Allergic Contact dermatitis

Such contact eczema is due to coming in contact with specific allergens. Allergens can cause eczema if you have a specific allergy to the substance. Common allergens include poison oak, poison ivy, and poison sumac. You could develop allergies due to cleaning products, deodorants, cosmetics, construction materials, and medications too. Similarly, skin cream and lotions, fragrances, shampoos, clothing, metals, or shoes can also cause allergies.

Atopic eczema

This type of eczema occurs early in life and is common in infants between two to eighteen months. This occurs due to specific genetic allergies. Mostly, some family member has allergic asthma, hay fever, or food allergies. In babies, this eczema appears on the face, ears, neck, and body too. Elder children find eczema eruptions on their knees, elbows, ankles, hands, eyelids, and joints too.

Infantile Seborrhoeic Eczema

This eczema commonly affects infants under the age of one year. This is the same as cradle cap. It starts from the scalp or nappy region and spreads quickly. The cause for this eczema is unknown. It does not itch or cause any discomfort to the baby. Such eczema clears after few weeks, although you can apply moisturizing creams and bath oils.

Irritant Contact Dermatitis

Such contact eczema occurs due to contact with specific irritants. These irritants cause multiple allergic reactions within the body. Some common irritants are soap, saliva, bubble bath, sweat, chemicals, detergents, urine, or even water. This is a common occurrence in the hands of adults. Applying moisturizers on hands and avoiding irritants are the common remedies.

Other types of eczema include varicose eczema, discoid eczema, nummular eczema, asteatotic eczema, lichen simplex chronicus, and stasis dermatitis. Varicose eczema is due to poor blood circulation and affects middle-aged and elderly people. Discoid and nummular eczema occur as coin-shaped round patches and is common among middle-aged men.

5. Signs and Symptoms of a Typical Eczema

Eczema is a common skin disease affecting children and adults.

The percentage of occurrence of eczema is higher in children. Even infants suffer from eczema, which appears as a patch below the chin or a cradle cap. Eczema makes your skin very sensitive and has a very noticeable reaction to strong detergents and other irritants.

Common Signs and Symptoms of Eczema

Itching is the primary symptom of Eczema. That leads to other symptoms like rashes. The itchiness of eczema patches can be severe enough to wake you from your sleep at night. Itchiness of eczema patches where your limbs bend can cause great discomfort. The cause of the itch is still being investigated.

A patchy rash appears soon after the itching becomes intense and the rash could cause a burning sensation too.

The skin at these regions turns red, flaky or scaly. You may find dry scales on top of the red skin.

Sometimes, these rashes become crusty and fluids ooze out. Some rashes appear as red and fluid-filled bumps. This symptom is common in eczema eruptions of young children. They scratch these and the fluid, which may contain pus in severe cases, oozes out - giving a wet appearance.

Crusts form from the fluid of the eczema eruptions. The fluid is normally protein-rich and these infected crusts are often golden in color.

Bacteria enter through these eruptions, causing increased redness in the eczema patches and you also feel the patches becoming very hot.

Eczema patches in adults are thicker, scaly and mostly brown in color.

Some rashes develop cracks due to the dryness of the skin. These cracks become painful with time.

The rashes can appear anywhere on the body. The most common places are your arms, face, hands, legs and feet. These places are among the first parts of your body exposed to external irritants and allergens.

The skin at the eczema patches thickens due to your repetitive scratching, which is very hard to avoid. This occurs as a protective response of your skin against constant and regular itching at the eczema patches.

The thick skin leads to fissures and splits, very common in the joints and other flexible parts of your body like at the elbows, below the knees, in front of the ankles.

Inflamed and eczema-affected skin flares up at any time. The duration of the flare-up and its severity differs from person to person. The same person may experience different types of flare-ups. Sometimes, these flare-ups can cause many weeks of intense discomfort.

6. What is the Real Cause of Eczema?

The exact cause of eczema is unknown. Your body's immune system releases certain chemicals under the skin and, sometimes, this can cause inflammation of your skin; you develop itches, rashes and other symptoms of eczema.

A major contributing factor for eczema eruptions is your genetic disposition. There is no clear medical evidence to prove which genes are responsible for eczema. Nevertheless, if either parent has bouts of eczema, there is a 25% to 60% chance of the child developing it. If both parents have a history of eczema, there is a 50% to 80% chance for occurrence of eczema in their children. The extent of your eczema seems to depend to some degree on your exposure to strong medications and antigens too.

Eczema seems to be due to a combination of many factors; genetic, environmental, and within your body's immune system. If you have a very sensitive immune system, you have a higher chance of developing eczema of some kind.

Other contributing factors could be your age, environment, allergies, irritants etc.

Different types of eczema have different causes too:

Irritant Contact Dermatitis occurs due to contact with harmful chemicals like poor quality detergents, soaps, and cleaning products. Irritants may take a considerable time to cause eczema. Regular, continued exposure to such irritant detergents often causes eczema.

Similarly, **Allergic Contact Dermatitis** occurs due to specific allergens, like metal, rubber, cosmetics, perfumes, neomycin found in most antiseptic creams and also weeds like poison ivy. These allergens take effect immediately - you develop eczema soon after coming in contact with them. Eczema can occur due to allergens like pollen dust, animal dander, dust mites, and molds. Certain workplace chemicals and fumes are also believed to cause eczema.

Neuro dermatitis seems to be linked to wearing tight-fitting and skin hugging garments. They rub against your skin and cause scratches and irritations that develop into eczema.

If you have oily hair or skin, you could develop **Seborrheic dermatitis**. This type of eczema occurs according to particular seasons. Sometimes, this occurs in people suffering from neurological diseases like Parkinson's disease.

Perioral dermatitis is often due to frequent use of moisturizers and makeup. Certain dental products containing fluoride also seem to cause this type of eczema around your nose and mouth.

Weather also plays an important role in your eczema. The cold air in the winter months lacks moisture and makes your skin dry and susceptible to eczema. The cold air in the summer months has more moisture and humidity and keeps your skin moist. Sudden changes in temperature increase itchiness and eczema. Entering a warm room or going into cold air from a warm shower may encourage your eczema to appear. Stress is another important factor for eczema of any kind.

7. Risk Factors for Eczema

Eczema is most common in children between the ages of one and three years. More than 65% of eczema cases start before the first birthday, while more than 90% of eczema cases occur before the age of five. Although allergens rank as the most important cause for eczema, it is not the same as for other allergic reactions within your body. People with eczema have the necessary antibodies (immunoglobulin E) to fight away allergies but eczema will still often occur.

The major risk factors of eczema are:

Family history of asthma, hay fever, and eczema

Exposing your skin to harsh weather; extreme cold and chilling

Living in a climate that has low humidity

Family history of allergies to food, chemicals, plants, animal dander, molds and similar allergens

Lack of specific vitamins and minerals like zinc, magnesium and others.

Cigarette smoke

Certain fibers like wool and some synthetic materials

Mental and emotional stress

Environmental allergens like dust, smoke, pollen or sand

Certain types of soaps, detergents, acids, dyes, cleaning agents, perfumes, cosmetics, metal, rubber and some products containing dental fluorides

Certain allergens like poison ivy weeds

Certain preservatives that are present in some lotions and creams

Specific types of foods like tomatoes, sweets, chocolate, alcohol, shellfish, wheat, dairy products, corn and soybeans

Intense heat and perspiration

Illnesses like fungal skin infection, cold sores, bacterial skin infections, Athlete's foot, Ringworm, cuts, burns or insect bites and bacterial infections

Lack of sufficient blood circulation in the lower parts of your body

Bathing without moisturizing

Coming into contact with metal jewelry and rubber gloves.

Although these are the general risk factors for eczema, it is not always certain that it is these factors that are definitely the trigger for an eczema attack. Some of these allergens may not affect some sufferers at all. Some may cause immediate effect while some others may have a negative effect after few days or hours. Your individual physical and mental health also plays an important role in your experience of eczema.

8. Who Gets Eczema?

Eczema can occur in children and adults, although the percentage of occurrence is higher in children. Most eczema cases are children under the age of five. One in every six schoolchildren develops eczema of any type. These flare-ups decrease as you grow. Most teenagers outgrow eczema problems. In a few cases, eczema shows considerable decrease in the teenage years.

A very small minority of children continue to have eczema in their adult years too. The incidence is very low as about only three in a hundred adults have eczema. However, you cannot predict which of the children would carry forth their eczema into adult years or which would leave eczema behind with their teen years. Again, it is very rare for adults over twenty to develop eczema.

Infants are the most vulnerable to eczema that occur due to allergies from your genes or the environment. Genetic allergies to asthma, hay fever, food allergies and nasal allergies are believed to cause most cases of eczema. Allergies are hereditary factors that are believed to be responsible for causing eczema. You have a higher chance of developing eczema if you have a family history of such allergies.

Environmental factors may also determine your eczema attacks. These factors affect your body's immune system and its response when similar circumstances occur again later. Too little and too much response to environment is unhealthy. Therefore, setting the body immune system and response to the correct level in early childhood is essential to maintain your health.

Children growing up in a country environment may have fewer chances of developing allergies of asthma, hay fever, and consequent eczema. Similarly, children with older siblings, those in day care homes, and those developing many cold infections have fewer instances of nasal allergies and consequent eczema.

Eczema does not have any differentiation of gender. Both male and female children have equal chances of developing eczema. Children under the age of one have 65% chances of developing eczema while children under the age of five have 90% chances. Eczema can start in infants of six to twelve weeks. However, chances of eczema occurrence are very uncommon after the age of thirty.

9. Eczema in Children

Children in families with a history of hay fever or asthma may have a higher risk of suffering the severe itching and redness from the excessively dry skin caused by eczema in childhood. Treating eczema in children is a challenge because it makes the child very uncomfortable and you cannot stop him from scratching. The disease may appear as early as five months of age and sometimes may go away by the age of three.

However, you must take proper steps to first diagnose the disease and follow proper treatment with a dermatologist so that the child gets proper relief. Eczema can result from an allergy to house pets, dust or mites or specific foods but it is difficult to detect these allergens even with specific allergy tests. Start remedial action the moment that the first signs of eczema appear.

Very small children get a rash on their cheeks and under their diapers. The rash may extend to the neck and the limbs causing great agony to the child. In extreme cases, the rash may produce pus and cause skin infections. So, take immediate steps to moisturize the rash affected area with a neutral cream. As the child grows, the rash may appear behind the knees, hands and neck. The child may be allergic to woolen clothes and exhibit dry chapped skin near the ears.

You must always clothe the child in cotton clothes and avoid synthetic clothes that trap heat and cause itchiness. You must use a light moisturizer in summer and a thicker one in winter so that the child is properly hydrated. Apply this immediately after a bath to

lock the moisture within the skin. Avoid using perfumes and scented soaps as they can result in an allergic reaction. You must use neutral washing soaps for clothes and clean them with vinegar if the water is hard.

Take care to avoid exposing the child to known allergens. You must constantly apply moisturizers to prevent dryness. For severe eczema, consult a doctor who may prescribe stronger creams that will bring relief. In cases of bacterial skin infections, consult a doctor for oral antibiotics or creams to treat the infection. There are several new creams in the market which can reduce the swelling. These are perfectly safe for children.

In a severe case of eczema, use cold water to bathe your child since hot water dries the skin, aggravating the eczema. Add some salt to the bath water if the child experiences a stinging sensation while bathing. You must use the mildest soap and the softest towels for your child's sensitive skin so that he feels no pain.

Eczema may disappear as your child grows up. However, take good care to change his diet to include healthier foods. This will keep him safe from allergies and give him the required nutrition. Thus, eczema in children needs proper care and management to help the child overcome the fear of the disease.

10. Recent Research on Eczema

People, and specially children, that suffer from eczema often endure some mental agony, as they are the butt of jokes from school friends. This greatly affects their quality of life. Studies that were conducted by a British magazine show that children become introverted and lead a restricted life due to their treatment by society. They do not play with friends or socialize much, for fear of being boycotted.

Eczema can cause varying periods of itching and redness. Several studies have shown that hypnosis may be effective in dealing with this pain since the patients learn how to think positively about overcoming the disease. Persons suffering from eczema or other skin conditions undergo a lot of anxiety and hypnosis can help them relax greatly. So, having a positive frame of mind helps sufferers to better manage the disease.

Several recent studies indicate that eczema may be a result of genetic factors. Research is underway to help isolate the specific genes. Moreover, children have a greater chance of getting skin disorders if either or both parents suffer from any skin diseases. In the case of twins, both may have an equal chance of inheriting skin afflictions from their parents.

Research reveals that the lack of essential fatty acids in some people makes them susceptible to skin diseases as the body loses the ability to retain moisture. Some people suffering dermatitis lack certain blood cells that cause their body to produce extreme reactions. Some people with eczema have excess amounts of an enzyme responsible for producing allergic reaction. This causes itching and redness in the skin because the body thinks it is fighting an allergen.

Some studies indicate that when the immune system is upset, the person suffers from several skin infections and allergic conditions. This is because the enzyme controlling allergy is present in excess amounts and those controlling skin infections are present in minuscule amounts. Several other studies are underway to find a co-relation between the presence of different types of cells and their effect on the body's allergic response system.

Other enterprising researchers are hopeful of finding solutions in alternative medicine and herbs to cure eczema.

Part-III: Diagnosis of Eczema

11. How to Diagnose Eczema

If you suffer from severe bouts of eczema, consult a doctor for the proper diagnosis and treatment. Eczema can result in itching, redness and - in severe cases - it can cause bacterial skin infections. If you have red patches under your skin, visit a doctor immediately - it can be a serious affliction.

First, the doctor will take down your medical history, including any known food and medicine allergies. He will want to know about your family history and known presence of asthma or hay fever in either parent or siblings. He will ask about the duration and occurrence of eczema and examine the affected areas minutely. He will suggest a few tests, based on this initial conversation, to pinpoint the allergy-causing factor(s).

You must keep a food diary and note the outbreak of any eczema after consuming specific foods. Some food colors, like azo dyes, are known to cause eczema. Other food allergens include milk, eggs, peanuts, and walnuts. Anxiety and stress, along with very dry skin can be responsible for eczema. In this case, the doctor will feed you the suspected allergen and wait for your body's response. In severe cases, the response may be immediate, while there may be no response in other cases.

Before conducting a skin patch test, the doctor will conduct a histamine test to see your response to allergens. If you do not respond to this test, it can be difficult to draw any conclusions from the skin allergy tests. The doctor may also give you a negative

saline test that contains no allergy-inducing substance. If you react to this, it implies you have super sensitive skin and probably cannot undergo patch tests.

The doctor can put specific materials on your skin or back and cover them with a patch. He will also place a control patch on another area of the skin. He will then remove the patch after two to three days and check for redness or swelling. The presence of discoloration or swelling indicates a positive allergy to that substance. For those who have very sensitive skin, the doctor may conduct the allergy test by putting a needle under your skin.

A dermatologist can also prescribe tests to rule out allergies to certain perfumes or chemicals that the person may work with at home or in the workplace. In most skin tests, the doctor will insert a small amount of the allergen in to your skin. An allergy will cause an instant reaction, confirming the presence of an allergy inducing substance.

Sometimes, a blood test may reveal the presence of enzymes that are responsible for severe allergic reaction, which causes the frequent bouts of eczema. Your blood may be sent for detailed radio testing where it will be exposed to different allergens. Ideally, you should not be consuming any medicines at the time when undergoing a blood test, as this may impair the test results.

So tell your doctor about any medication that you may be taking before undergoing a blood test. Based on the response to these allergens, he may be able to rule out or confirm the eczema-causing allergen.

In extreme cases, the doctor may recommend a lesion biopsy if he suspects some unusual or rare skin disorder.

Once the allergen is known, you will follow the recommended treatment and keep away from known allergens.

Diagnosis plays an important part in managing eczema and is the first step in effectively treating it.

Part-IV: Prevention of Eczema

12. Tips to Avoid Eczema

According to recent research, people that are allergic to dust mites are prone to severe eczema. If you are allergic to dust mites, you should change your bedding everyday and free your home of all dust. Here are some more tips that will help to reduce your eczema problem.

A Few Tips to Avoid Eczema

Keep a check and avoid all those things that irritate your

skin: There are many household things that could irritate your skin, like detergents, soap, lotion creams, or similar products. If you have eczema on your hands, wash your hands only when necessary, for wetness and soap can cause irritation and inflame it even further.

Keep your hands covered with gloves: Good plastic or vinyl gloves are advisable, if your work requires you to touch water too often. Do not wear the gloves for too long as this could lead to accumulation of sweat. During the winter, wearing gloves is advisable, as cold winds can make your skin dryer and thus aggravate your eczema.

Wear comfortable clothes, preferably of cotton blend:

Synthetic and woolen fabrics generally tend to be more likely to irritate the skin, so people with sensitive skin should consider avoiding such fabrics.

Skin-care during your bath or shower: Use less soap, or a very mild one, while taking a shower or bathing. The water that you

bathe with should not be hot. If you soak yourself in the bathtub for at least 15 to 20 minutes, your skin will absorb some water and keep it moist. Pat yourself dry with a soft towel and apply a good moisturizer immediately after drying. This will help to seal in the moisture.

Use a medicine prescribed by your doctor: If your eczema becomes aggravated, use a medicine from your physician after your bath. Generally, medicine for eczema probably has a steroid in it. Read the instructions carefully or follow your doctor's advice. If the problem persists beyond three weeks, you should always consult your doctor.

Use of a good moisturizer is very necessary for your skin to keep your skin soft and supple. Moisturizers prevent your skin from cracking. Do not use moisturizers with fragrances or additional ingredients such as preservatives. Petroleum jelly is a plain and cheap moisturizer. Your moisturizer should be more greasy than creamy.

Regular use of a moisturizer helps to prevent your skin drying, which is common in winter.

Do not rub or scratch the itchy areas: Rubbing and scratching breaks the skin and can be the cause of bacterial infection.

Avoid heat and too much perspiration: Heat could cause you to perspire and cause irritation for your skin. When you are most prone to eczema, reduce activities that will make you perspire.

Keep yourself free of stress: Reduce your eczema by changing your attitude and learning to cope with stress.

Care for your skin even after you heal: Continue with the care even after your skin is free of eczema, or the area may get irritated again.

A handy, brief review of all the tips: -

To avoid irritation, always keep your skin cool and moist.

For small itchy areas, apply 1 percent hydrocortisone cream according to your physician's direction; too much use of this cream is harmful for the skin.

Bathe, or take brief showers, daily with lukewarm water.

Avoid soap while bathing. Use either a non-soap cleanser or a very mild soap.

Immediately after bathing, use some good lubricating cream.

For severe itching, take an antihistamine, like Benadryl if approved by your doctor. (Antihistamines have sedatives which may cause drowsiness. So, avoid driving and operating machinery or equipments while you are on this medicine)

You should avoid the use of antiseptic or antihistamine ointments, creams and sprays.

Your bedroom should be humid or you can turn the humidifier on while sleeping.

Wear loose, comfortable dresses, which may save you from rashes.

Allergens and irritants increase your problem, so it is better that you avoid them.

Wash your clothes properly with mild soap; keep your bed sheets clean too.

A sudden change of temperature will harm you, so avoid overheating.

Part-V: Treatment of Eczema

13. Treatment Options for Eczema

Clear, flawless skin is a gift of Nature that many people do not have. Your skin is one of the most sensitive body parts and requires great care. Many environmental and internal factors cause eczema and there are different treatments for each:

Contact dermatitis: If a patient is suffering from **contact dermatitis**, they should identify the exact cause of irritation and avoid it. Hydrocortisone, a substance found in moisturizing creams also helps in subsiding itching and redness. The patient will have to continue using the cream for about two to four weeks.

Seborrhoeic dermatitis: **Seborrhoeic dermatitis**, or dandruff, causes skin flaking. Patients should frequently shampoo their scalp and rinse it carefully. Specific shampoos containing zinc, salicylic acid, tar, pyrithione and ketoconazole may help in removing this dermatitis. Hydrocortisone lotions and creams may alleviate itching.

Perioral eczema: It may require treatment with the oral antibiotic, tetracycline, for several months. During the initial phase, the patient may sometimes require corticosteroid cream to reduce its symptoms. Strong dose(s) of corticosteroids may stop the symptoms for a few months but the infection might recur after a while if not completely healed.

Neurodermatitis: It is a chronic kind of eczema. A neurodermatitis patient suffers from an irresistible urge to scratch the skin. This results in thickening of the skin. The disease is more common

among women and follows a continuous scratch-itch-scratch cycle. Cotton clothes reduce irritation and wet compresses may provide much-needed relief. In extreme cases, doctors may prescribe sedatives and tranquilizers to stop the scratching for a few hours.

Stasis dermatitis: Patients suffering from **Stasis dermatitis** require treatment of the accumulated fluids in legs and ankles that has been there for a long period. The patient may have to undergo varicose vein surgery or wear elastic support hose. Wet dressings sometimes also help softening the thickened skin and provide timely relief.

Atopic dermatitis: Application of hydrocortisone-containing lotions helps in relieving the irritation of **Atopic dermatitis**. The doctor may prescribe wet dressings if the skin cracks. The mildly astringent properties of wet dressing help in contracting the skin and minimizing secretion. Under severe itching conditions, the doctor may even prescribe antihistamines. Immunomodulators are special drugs that maintain normal skin conditions and reduce flare up. These drugs can also treat atopic dermatitis, though their prolonged use risks undesirable side effects.

Apart from the specific medication treatment that a patient has to undergo, they should avoid certain common conditions that can aggravate itching and irritation such as:

Avoid 'Triggers': Even if your skin is prone to dermatitis, you can help to keep it in good condition if you avoid 'triggers.' Many conditions or substances can act as a trigger and culminate in skin irritation, rashes and itching. Some people cannot bear scorching

sunrays and develop rashes. Similarly, salty seawater may also cause skin irritation.

Use emollient: Eczema makes the skin prone to dryness and cracking. Emollients, or moisturizers, oil the skin, soften it and reduce thickening. They also reduce flare-ups of the skin. Regular use of moisturizers helps in eczema treatment. Thick emollients stay longer and moisten the skin adequately. You should not stop its use even when the skin problem seems to have gone as it may crop up again. Calendula ointment, chickweed ointment, primrose oil, etc. are some effective emollients.

Avoid bubble baths: Use of bubble baths and soaps makes the skin dry. Soaps are highly alkaline and tend to remove the natural greasiness of the skin. A soap substitute with a high percentage of a moisturizing agent may help with your eczema. Detergents can have content that may irritate when in contact with your skin if your clothes are not rinsed properly.

Use Topical steroids with caution: Topical steroids are commonly used for treating eczema. They can be categorized as mild, moderately potent, potent and very potent depending on their effect. Mild steroids are generally used to treat inflammation but you should be cautious, and discontinue its use immediately after the inflammation subsides. Prolonged use of steroids may result in undesirable side effects. Usually, a treatment course of 7 to 14 days is enough to treat eczema, but some patients may need to repeat its use now and then to reduce the chance of a sudden flare-up.

Stay away from allergens: Allergy from dust mites is common among people suffering from eczema. Regular cleaning of your

furniture and, especially, your bedroom, sheets, pillowcases, blankets and mattresses may help. It is not easy to do away with it completely.

Some food items may also cause an allergy. Eggs, cow's milk, wheat, soya, fish, and nuts are some common edibles that cause allergic reactions. Small children are more prone to it. The best way is to avoid such food items that seem to trigger your eczema. Other factors such as pollens, dander, and mold also cause dermatitis. Pets sometimes cause itching when you come into contact with them. The causative bacteria settle on your skin and cause irritation. Sometimes, continuous scratching may also worsen the skin condition.

Unavoidable factors like hormonal changes, stress and pregnancy might trigger temporary skin allergies. When the body comes to normalcy, eczema also subsides. Acupuncture is good for relieving stress and can thereby help in managing eczema as well. You can even resort to natural supplements such as fish oil and vitamin C rich food that greatly reduce itching. Good external and dietary care can help to wipe away eczema and your skin may glow with a healthy shine again.

Part-VI: Natural Remedies for Eczema

14. Natural Remedies to Prevent and Sooth Eczema

Prevention

“Prevention is better than cure”, goes the famous saying. That saying applies to eczema. It is better to avoid all those substances that cause eczema. Keep your skin moist as that can help you avoid this to some extent.

Here are few suggestions that may help to keep eczema at bay:

People who have eczema, or are prone to it, need not bathe daily. When you go for a bath, keep it to no more than 15 to 20 minutes only. In addition, bathe with lukewarm (not too hot or too cold) water only.

Use mild soap or non-soap cleanser. Fragrant bathing products are not good for your body. Limit the use of soap to face, genital areas, hands, and feet.

Pat yourself dry with a towel. You can also brush your skin rapidly with the palm of your hand and immediately after that use a moisturizer, as it can help to seal in moisture.

Soothing Eczema or Dermatitis

The basic treatment for Eczema is to keep the skin clean and moist. The other conventional advice for Eczema is to bathe every other day, instead of once each day.

However, contrary to the common belief that bathing breaks the oil layer in the skin and causes dryness, some people claim that long soaks in lukewarm water do wonders!

You can also add milled oats in a muslin bag to the water you use. You must immerse yourself in water as much as possible. Drape wet towels over the shoulders, arms, and upper trunk if they are above water level.

Keep dabbing your face to avoid dryness. Minimize the use of soap. Mild agents like Cetaphil may be advisable. Immediately after you pat yourself dry, use ointments like Aquaphor, Unibase or Vaseline to prevent the skin from getting dry. Do not use lotions as lotions have alcohol in them. Severe conditions of Eczema can be very painful; soaking in plain water can be very painful too. During such times, add one and a half cup of table salt to the water to prepare a saline solution and use this solution, which will be very relieving. The same solution can be used to soak the wet wraps in.

Keep your surrounding free of aggravating factors like dust and cigarette smoke. Keep your clothes and bedding clean and free of dust. Avoid perfumes. Adjust the room temperature according to your comfort.

Keep your nails trimmed to avoid serious scratching. Sometimes, children can only be prevented from doing so if you cover the infected area with some clothing. Their hands can be covered with gloves too.

Some other therapies may become handy to relieve you of this disease, apart from skin care and other environmental precautions.

Acupuncture and Meditation

Treatment of blood and energy deficiency can be done through acupuncture and meditation.

Some people with Eczema use meditation to relieve their stress, which may be very beneficial.

Massage and Aromatherapy

Another therapy that can be very effective is Massage. It is very helpful to keep your stress level down. Similarly, aromatherapy is quite effective too; the lavender oils, bergamot, and geranium oils can bring about great relief, as they are known to reduce itching and inflammation.

Herbal therapy

Many herbs and their associated therapy that can be quite useful to improve skin conditions are -

Calendula ointment and German chamomile have anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties in them.

Chickweed and Nettle ointment have properties of soothing itching in it.

Evening primrose oil has the property to relieve itchiness and fatty acids supplement.

Peppermint is reputed to have antibacterial and antiseptic properties.

Other Care

Removing, as far as possible, wheat products, eggs, milk products, fish and peanuts from your diet may help and you should avoid any contact with people that have chicken pox or any other contagious skin infections.

The Result

Eczema reduces its hold on you, as you grow older. Though it does not have a specific cure at the time of writing, many children get over it when they reach the age of five. Taking care of your skin and avoiding the factors that trigger it can help to reduce the effect of eczema.

15. Treating Eczema with Herbs

You can try alternative herbal therapies to treat eczema. They are believed to have little side effects. Some people say that may be as effective as antibiotics in curing or preventing eczema. However, consult your doctor and naturopath to rule out any interactions with medication that you may be presently taking. You can use herbs in the form of dry powder, ointments or drink them in the form of herbal tea.

Several natural oils soothe the area afflicted by eczema. Chief among them are lavender oil that soothes the nerves and evening primrose oil. They are usually consumed with food each day. Evening primrose oil is soothing on cracked skin and usually causes no burning. You can take a spoonful of flax seed oil to reduce the swelling associated with eczema.

Lavender oil is widely used for skin infections, including sunburn.

Herbs like red clover and yellow dock may be highly effective in treating eczema. Just confirm that you are not allergic to these herbs before you consume them in any form. You can use the bark of the cork tree for painful sores. It removes excessive heat from the body. The roots of the saphora plant prevent itching while chamomile oil can reduce the swelling associated with eczema. Some people say that goldenrod provides fast healing for open cuts.

Consuming herbs in any form may help to improve the lymphatic drainage and remove excessive heat from the body. Herbal tea may be made from marshmallow or peppermint. Some people prepare a tincture of the recommended herbs. To make tea, you must steep the roots of the herb for about ten minutes and then add the other

ingredients and cook for another ten minutes. You can then cool it and store it for consumption throughout the day.

For painful and open sores due to eczema, you can apply herbal ointments made from calendula, chamomile or licorice. Other herbal preparations that may cool your body include red peony roots, foxglove root and other parts of the peony plant.

You can use other roots to expel wind.

When undergoing herbal treatment for eczema, consult a qualified naturopath whose medicines have some sort of record of accomplishment. You must have faith in the herbal treatment for there to be any chance that it may be effective in treating your eczema.

16. Treating Eczema with Acupuncture

In today's world, when diseases are spreading widely, Eczema is recognized as a very serious skin disease.

Eczema seems to have mostly external causes. However, it can have causes due to internal defects in the body as well. Eczema is sometimes chronic or acute. The most noticeable symptom of Eczema is the appearance of serious lesions in the skin. The patient's condition becomes quite intense due to dryness and itching. Some lesions appear to be simple small blisters. Later, they burst and secrete fluids that may contain infective matter.

The pain can increase further if the weather conditions are not favorable.

The condition can become even worse if you consume caffeine or alcohol. Taking of drugs can be helpful at the time but may not continue to be as effective. Many of them do not prevent Eczema perfectly. It can occur again.

Some people believe that you can improve this terrible condition with the help of acupuncture.

In acupuncture, you insert pre-sterilized and delicate stainless steel needles at selected points on the surface of the body.

Some patients do not have a pinching sensation on the skin while some have during the process.

The treatment is simple. You feel peaceful and relaxed for many hours. Supporters of the treatment say that you can drive or do any sort of work after this process.

How did the concept of acupuncture emerge? It came from the belief that injecting specific areas of the skin can affect the normal functioning of the body.

What is the process of Acupuncture treatment? In the first phase, the dermatologist questions the patient to get all details of the patient's symptoms, his diet, the condition of the body, his mental condition (like sleep patterns) and psychological condition. He may also examine the patient's tongue, color, and coating along with their pulse.

Many people fear that acupuncture can cause serious problems because it employs injection for the treatment. However, experienced practitioners that do their job earnestly seem to get good results for their patients.

17. Treating Eczema with Vitamins and Supplements

Vitamins and supplements are one of the most effective ways of treating Eczema.

Some vitamins and supplements that help in treating Eczema are:

Grape seed extract - Take Grape seed extract two times daily (100 mg). It contains 92-95% Proanthocyanidins which are believed to have powerful anti-oxidant properties.

Vitamin A (aka Retinoid) – It is believed to reduce drying of the skin, lines and wrinkles. You can find this in large amounts in eggs, organ meats, whole milk, dairy, carrots, and broccoli.

Vitamin B-complex - They are necessary for skin nutrition. You can find them in your diet or taken as a supplement. You can find them in bananas, eggs, oatmeal, and rice. If you do take a supplement, your urine will turn bright yellow. This is not something to be concerned about.

B-1 (aka Thiamine) - It helps the body to get rid of toxins and has antioxidant properties. Many people take this twice a day.

B-2 (aka Riboflavin) - Essential for a healthy skin.

B-3 (aka Niacin) - It is necessary to retain moisture in the skin. You can now purchase non flushing niacin.

B-5 (Pantothenic acid) - Like Niacin, it helps to retain moisture in the skin.

B-6 (Pyridoxine) - Helps the body to fight against infections and diseases. Recommended dosage is 100mg three times a day.

B-12 (Cyanocobalamine) - This helps in cell division within the body. It is compulsory for vegetarians and optional for non-vegetarians.

Vitamin C (ascorbic acid) - You can find it in citrus fruits, bell peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, and leafy greens. Required daily.

Vitamin D - You can get this from sunlight.

Vitamin E (Alpha tocopherol) - It rehydrates the skin, protects skin from any sort of damage, protects skin from drying and sun-damage and does the job of antioxidant. It is found in vegetable oils, nuts, olives and spinach.

Vitamin-K - Helps in the reducing under-eye circles and healing bruises.

Hyaluronic acid - It has anti-aging properties. It is a good moisturizer as well.

Essential fatty acid - Reduces irritation of skin. You can find them in vegetable oils, fish, and nuts.

Chromium - Reduces infection of the skin and fights against acne.

Zinc - It helps to promote healing process.

18. Treating Eczema with Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional Chinese medicine, called Zemaphyte, is used for treatment of Eczema. Zemaphyte contains the following herbs: -

- * *Ledebouriella seseloides*
- * *Potentilla chinensis*
- * *Akebia clematidis*
- * *Rehmannia glutinosa*
- * *Paeonia lactiflora*
- * *Lophatherum gracile*
- * *Dictamnus dasycarpus*
- * *Tribulus terrestris*
- * *Glycyrrhiza uralensis*
- * *Schizonepeta tenuifolia*

Topical applications of chamomile also help in treating Eczema. Topical Chinese preparations containing calendula, chickweed, or oak bark⁴⁵ have been helpful for some patients for treating Eczema but results vary.

In the past, Burdock, sarsaparilla, red clover and wild oats were used for treatment of Eczema.

Chinese medicines, in the form of a tea extracted from the plant materials, are said by some to be very effective for treatment of Eczema. These plants contain a mixture of chemicals that are similar to biosynthesisers.

Extracts of these plants are said to have an anti-inflammatory effect and some have a sedative effect. Glycyrrhiza uralensis (licorice) is a Chinese product, which contains glycyrrhetic acid that is believed by its users to have the same effect on skin as hydrocortisone has.

There are tremendous clinics offering traditional Chinese medicine now. Some Chinese medicines may contain toxic materials as well, which are very detrimental for the liver. The traditional creams that the patients get may contain steroids.

Some steroids can have a bad effect and cause infections in the body.

The traditional Chinese medicine is claimed to be more beneficial than Western treatments. However, this type of treatment should be under strict medical supervision.

“Three Yellow Cleanser” is a typical traditional Chinese Medicine, which is claimed to be very effective for treating Eczema. It is applied externally to the skin. Acupuncture, plus traditional Chinese medicine, and internal and external therapy may relieve you of the symptoms of Eczema.

Part-VII: Coping with Eczema

19. The Impact of Eczema

Eczema has certain significant effects. A person having Eczema may experience the following:

Itching-Although itching is one of the core symptoms of Eczema; Eczema cannot be diagnosed just based on that. Research has found that, during itching, scratching the area that is showing signs of the eczema can cause the nerve signals to travel down the pain fibers blocking you from experiencing the itch but the effect of the scratching is to produce more itching and soreness after a short time.

Redness-Redness of the skin testifies to increased blood flow. When skin burns and blood vessels widen, the flow of blood becomes red. When the deeper layers of the skin are infected, there is increased redness.

Thickening- The skin areas affected with Eczema are much thicker than the unaffected skin. Eczema usually affects the areas around joints such as the elbow, behind the knees and in front of the ankles et al. You could see splits in the skin there.

Blisters- There is less adhesion between the skin cells. This leads to scaling and that is how the bacteria enter the deeper layers. This causes oozing of fluids that gather into collections of small blisters. Large blisters may occur due to skin infection.

Crusts- The fluid that comes out of the inflamed skin dries. It contains protein. When the fluid in the inflamed skin evaporates, the

protein left behind forms a crusty deposit. This is a typical effect of Eczema.

According to surveys, Eczema can have a serious impact on patient's relationships. People can get into a clinical depression because of Eczema. Children with Eczema are likely to underperform at sports and school. Although it is not a fatal disease, it has all these serious effects. Therefore, it is important that people get the best information so that they do not delay treatment. Knowledge is important.

20. Eczema and Diet

Diet plays an important role in Eczema. If anyone does not eat foods that give them the right vitamins and minerals in adequate amounts, the effects of this distressing disease can be much worse. A balanced diet is necessary for treating Eczema.

Food allergy is an important aspect of Eczema. Food allergy is food intolerance. It is an unpleasant reaction to certain food items and is non-psychological.

Foods that may cause an allergic reaction include:

Tree nuts

Peanuts

Cows' milk

Soya

Eggs

Fish and Shellfish

Cereals containing gluten (including wheat, rye, and barley)

Sesame seeds, etc.

It is very difficult to diagnose a food allergy. Your doctor can diagnose food allergy by skin tests or by lab tests. You should confirm the existence of the allergy by excluding the suspect food from your diet. After that, perform a challenge test. Dermatologists

perform this test mostly in the absence of the patient or investigator.

Once you have diagnosed and confirmed the specific food allergy, you must eliminate the foods containing all the forms of what you are allergic to but keep the diet healthy, enjoyable and well balanced.

These tests require medical supervision because of the risk of severe reaction (anaphylaxis). This severe reaction requires treatment with adrenaline. If the dermatologist diagnoses food allergy incorrectly, he might prescribe diets that can be very harmful to the body.

Breast-feeding of your children is believed to help prevent allergies from developing.

Allergies are inheritable.

Eczema has led increasing research into diet.

Environmental factors may make the skin even worse. Children with atopic Eczema respond well when you remove the harmful food items from their diet without making them aware of it. It is a peculiar type of food intolerance. Food allergies can lead to symptoms like runny nose, asthma, dilation of blood vessels, flushing and obstruction while breathing.

Many people do not understand food allergies and many myths have developed around them.

But, we know that Eczema and diet are interrelated and cannot be isolated from each other.

Part-VIII: Introduction and Understanding Psoriasis

21. Psoriasis - An Overview

Psoriasis is a chronic skin disease, which may be the result of immune system disorder. It is hereditary, but not contagious. The primary organ that is affected by psoriasis is the skin. But it also affects the joints in a few cases.

Psoriasis can affect anyone at any age.

Types of Psoriasis

There are different kinds of Psoriasis:

Plaque Psoriasis: They are raised lesions with silvery scale and inflamed skin beneath that appear on the knees, scalp, elbows, and trunk. This form of psoriasis is the most common one.

Guttate Psoriasis: They are usually seen on the trunk, arms and legs. These lesions appear as tiny red dots and may have scales. It generally appears after a respiratory infection.

Inverse Psoriasis: These smooth, inflamed lesions mostly appear on flexible surfaces like armpits, under the breast, groin and in skin folds.

Pustular Psoriasis: This Psoriasis is generally spread over the sufferer's hand and feet and appears as little pimples filled with pus.

Erythrodermic Psoriasis: This psoriasis is associated with inflammation, pain and itching. It is often covered with fine scaling.

Scalp Psoriasis: They are erythematic lesions with silvery white scales and appear on the scalp.

Nail Psoriasis: As the name suggests, they appear on your nails and cause them to yellow and harden. They then crack and separate from the nail beds.

Psoriatic arthritis: They affect people with some sort of skin disorders. This arthritis is generally in the joints of hands and feet, but it affects the larger joints at times too. It brings stiffness, acute pain and subsequent damage to the bones.

Oral psoriasis: This psoriasis is generally seen as whitish lesions on the mucous membrane, which gets more severe by the day.

Other Facts about Psoriasis: -

Psoriasis is widely found in lighter skinned people. 2% to 3% of the U.S.A. population suffers from this disease.

Psoriasis may be hereditary and also has much to do with the climatic condition of the area.

400 deaths every year in US are Psoriasis related, and approximately 1.5 million people seek medical help every year in the U.S.A. alone.

Psoriasis is more common in women.

Psoriasis mostly begins in children below the age of 10.

Psoriasis Grading

Psoriasis is graded as mild, moderate or severe. The **Psoriasis Area Severity Index** is the most widely used measurement tool for Psoriasis. It grades from 0 (no disease) to 72 (maximum).

Psoriasis Vs Quality of life

Psoriasis takes a toll on one's life. It may lead to depression, hypertension, congestive heart failure, type-2 diabetes or myocardial infarction (heart attack). Sufferers tends to get self-conscious about their looks.

22. What is Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a chronic skin disease, which causes swelling with scales. The cell turnover, a process where the skin cell grows deep in the skin and slowly rises to the top, normally takes about a month but, with psoriasis, it happens very fast (usually within in few days). The cell rises and is stored on the surface.

Psoriasis mainly affects the skin and the joints and appears as inflamed, scaly lesions.

There are several factors in the appearance of psoriasis, including stress, alcoholism, some medicines, etc. Psoriasis can affect either sex.

There is no cure for psoriasis. It continues through your life, and may be subdued sometimes, but flares up again.

There are five types of psoriasis and each has some unique symptoms. Plaque psoriasis is the most common form of psoriasis and appears as a red raised patch.

Another is guttate psoriasis. This is red, drop-shaped and affects mostly children and young adults.

The third is the pustular psoriasis, which is seen as white pus formed lesions, surrounded by red skin.

There is also Inverse psoriasis, which is smooth and occurs in skin folds.

The fifth is Erythrodermic psoriasis, which spreads over the entire body.

Any kind of Psoriasis may be the cause of great discomfort to the patient. The skin cracks, bleeds and itches. This causes pain and, in severe cases, leads to hospitalization.

Treatment of psoriasis depends on the specific type.

A quick overview of psoriasis:

Psoriasis is a chronic, scaling skin disease with redness and inflammation.

Psoriasis mostly appears as raised red patches of skin covered with silver white scales.

Psoriasis is a hereditary, but not contagious disease.

Its exact cause is unknown.

Psoriasis is an acceleration of the usual replacement processes of the skin's cells.

About 10% of people with psoriasis develop psoriatic arthritis.

The five kinds of psoriasis are plaque, guttate, inverse, pustular and erythrodermic.

The more severe forms of psoriasis may demand intensive medical care and may be life threatening.

There is no cure for psoriasis but it can be controlled. It requires lifelong therapy.

The reactions from other people because of the unpleasant eruptions can bring seclusion from society and an inferiority complex.

23. Types of Psoriasis

Psoriasis is a chronic skin disease, which has different forms. It is essential for you to know the actual form of psoriasis you suffer from as the different types of psoriasis need different treatments.

At times, one type of psoriasis appears and evolves into another.

The different types are:

Plaque Psoriasis

is a very common form of psoriasis. It shows as a raised red inflamed area with scaly silvery patches. It varies in size and can wax or wane. It is commonly found in areas such as the knees, elbows, arms, legs, genital areas, chest, scalp, and lower back.

Initially, it is almost unnoticeable. However, the affected area gradually enlarges and the silvery scaly flakes form. In its severe stage, cracking of the skin, bleeding and lots of discomfort occur which have an impact on everyday activities.

Guttate Psoriasis

Most people who get Psoriasis develop Guttate Psoriasis. It is found in children and young adults with a history of streptococcal infections. A mild case of Guttate Psoriasis may gradually vanish from the body on its own and never appear again, but there is always a chance that it may reappear. Sometimes, it flares up later as Plaque Psoriasis. There are red, drop-sized dots on trunks, legs, face, scalp and ears. They may appear after a cold, tonsillitis, and skin injury or after a course involving certain medicines.

Pustular Psoriasis

Sunburns, infections or, possibly, reaction to certain medicines may result in Pustular Psoriasis. This is divided into two categories; localized and generalized. When it is confined to limited areas like the hands and feet, it is referred to as Localized Psoriasis. They are red drop-sized pus filled lesions that make using the hands or walking very painful.

But, Generalized Pustular Psoriasis spreads widely.

It may be triggered by an infection, pregnancy or, possibly, discontinuation of steroids or some medicine. This is a rare Psoriasis that may even be life threatening. People with this form of Psoriasis feel ill and exhausted.

These are not infectious, but the patient may have fever, anemia and severe itching. They can lose their appetite.

Inverse Psoriasis

Is a smooth patch of inflamed skin. It is found mostly in skin folds around the genitals, armpits or under the breasts. This psoriasis appears white, as if soaked in water, and looks like a fungal infection. It mostly affects overweight people. Friction and sweating tend to make it worse

Inverse Psoriasis can also be very severe.

Erythrodermic or Exfoliative Psoriasis

This form of Psoriasis is one of the least common, can spread widely over most body parts and may become life threatening. It makes

the skin lose its protective function and the body becomes prone to all harmful bacterial and other external attacks.

Certain medicines, alcohol, emotional stress, or suddenly stopping psoriasis medicine may lead to this form of Psoriasis.

It is associated with severe redness where the skin has a burned look. The patient exhibits an increased heart rate, severe itching and pain.

This psoriasis is mainly an aggravated form of plaque psoriasis and may be linked to the discontinuation of the medication for the plaque psoriasis.

This form may lead to body abnormalities and even be fatal by complicating the functions of the heart and causing heart failure.

Seborrhoeic psoriasis

This mostly affects the sufferer's scalp. A seborrhoeic-affected scalp looks like it has severe dandruff, with patches of thick flaky skin extending over the forehead and ears. Many people get the seborrhoeic inflammation, or a form of dandruff eczema. The dermatitis is characterized by crusted vesicles (crusted, small sacs or cysts that ooze).

Nail psoriasis.

This attacks the patient's nails, giving them a very ugly appearance. It discolors and cracks them. The nails thicken and then come away from the nail bed. A sign that may indicate this type of psoriasis is the appearance of brown spots on the nail.

Psoriatic arthritis

This is a related condition. Its symptoms are inflammation and dry, scaly, thick inflamed skin. Psoriatic arthritis attacks the joints; the hands, feet, knees and ankles. They become stiff and cause a lot of pain. This pain may even spread throughout the back, buttocks and neck.

About one quarter of people suffering from psoriasis can develop psoriatic arthritis.

24. What is the Real Cause of Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is one of the most common diseases. It is a chronic skin disease that affects 1% to 3% of world's population. Red patches occur on the body of the person suffering from Psoriasis.

The causes of Psoriasis are believed to include:

Genetic causes

Four genes are associated with Psoriasis where cause is believed to be linked to malfunctioning of the immune system that usually protects the body against infections and diseases.

Immune system causes

White blood cells regulate the immune system and produce antibodies that help the body to fight against infections and diseases. When a person is suffering from Psoriasis, the white blood cells can start fighting against the normal tissues in the skin and severely affect the patient's joints.

The white blood cells contain chemicals that may be detrimental to the skin.

Stress Triggers

Stress, unexpressed anger, and emotional disorders, like depression and anxiety, are important causes of Psoriasis. Researches have found that stress can affect the immune system adversely, thus causing Psoriasis.

Skin injury

Mild injuries to the skin, such as abrasions, can lead to Psoriasis.

The process in which the elbows and knees are affected by Psoriasis is called the Koebner phenomenon.

Infection Triggers

Another trigger of Psoriasis is bacterial or viral infection. The bacterium streptococcus causes tonsillitis, sinusitis and strep throat. This may ultimately cause Psoriasis. This type of Psoriasis is known as Guttate Psoriasis.

The following drugs may be associated with cases of Psoriasis:

- *Cloroquine
- *ACE inhibitors
- *Beta-blockers Lopressor or Atenolol
- *Progesterone
- *Indocin
- *Lithium

Alcohol consumption, smoking, and obesity may make the condition of the patient even worse.

Psoriasis is a strange disease. The condition of people suffering from Psoriasis may improve or worsen automatically.

The patients may experience several outbreaks but the first outbreak is associated with stress, skin injury or streptococcal

infection. To give the patient some relief from the symptoms of the disease, certain medicines, like lithium salt and beta-blockers, may be used.

25. Risk Factors for Psoriasis

The greater the number of risk factors you have, the more you may be likely to develop Psoriasis.

Psoriasis is a complex, chronic skin disease. It mostly begins between the ages of 15 and 35 and usually does not affect infants. Older children and young adults may have the most risk of Psoriasis.

According to researchers, exogenic and endogenic factors with obesity, alcohol use, smoking and emotional stress may have detrimental effects on the body of the person.

Risk factors may include:

Genetic factors can be important with Psoriasis. About 35% of the people inherit the symptoms of Psoriasis from their family.

Psoriasis affects both men and women without regard to age.

Climate plays an important role. You may be more likely to become a victim of Psoriasis in colder climates. So, Psoriasis is more common in Caucasians than in Africa.

Medication like beta-blockers, anti-malarial medications and lithium make the body more prone to this disease.

Medical conditions - People who have weak immune system develop this disease frequently.

Stress - Your risk of Psoriasis will increase if your stress level is high.

Exposure to sun and toxins - Excessive exposure to sunlight and environmental toxins can increase the risk of Psoriasis.

So, to reduce your exposure to the disease, consider the risk factors of Psoriasis. Remember Psoriasis is a harmful disease. However, it is usually treatable.

26. Who Gets Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a disease that is common in both males and females.

There may be a link of ethnicity. Caucasians have the greatest percentage of Psoriasis infections. It is less common in Asians compared to the Americans.

Psoriasis affects 0.5% to 3 percent of the world's population. Anybody can be a victim of Psoriasis.

Certain genes have been associated with the disease.

Both men and women can become victims of Psoriasis.

Many factors affect the occurrence of Psoriasis:

Age - Psoriasis can occur in children and a few infants. Mild symptoms can make it difficult to diagnose it properly.

Gender - Psoriasis is more prevalent in females than males.

Family History - The presence of the disease in one or both your parent's families can increase the chance that you develop the disorder.

Geography and ethnicity - People residing in a cold climate are more prone to this disorder than people residing in a warm climate.

The disease affects about one in 50 of the world's population. This disease is common in the people aged 15-35 years. About 75% of the people are victims of Psoriasis by the age of 40.

About one million people across the U.S.A. develop Psoriatic arthritis.

27. Psoriasis in Children

Not all diaper rashes are an outbreak of psoriasis but childhood psoriasis does occur. Although psoriasis in children is rare, there have been several cases recorded.

Psoriasis can break out, mostly in the form of guttate, before the age of four. Guttate psoriasis comes in the form of small scaly spots or patches that may appear on the scalp, trunk, or limb area. The patches can also get bigger but may develop slowly.

Most often, an outbreak of psoriasis is preceded by an infection, most commonly of the upper respiratory tract. Inflammations, like tonsillitis or streptococci, are capable of bringing on psoriasis in children who have a tendency to it. The diagnosis of psoriasis is often challenging since parents may initially ignore the rashes or the outbreak could be mild and not present itself very visibly.

There is a definite genetic link in the occurrence of psoriasis. Although the disease is not exclusively genetic, studies show that the chances of a child developing psoriasis is much higher if one parent is a carrier or suffers from the disease. Research is still ongoing to determine the faulty gene.

In the future, it may become possible to determine if a child will suffer from psoriasis through genetic detection.

Since psoriasis in children is not very common, there are virtually no FDA approved, child-safe treatments available.

Most children do react to the conventional treatment methods, including ointments and creams or tar preparations and dithranol or

steroids. But, these need to be limited when being administered to children.

In case of severe outbreak of psoriasis, UV light treatment may also be prescribed. Sometimes, antihistamines are quite effective in keeping the itch down and helping the healing process.

All treatment must, of course, only be given under prescription from a physician or dermatologist and parents must consult closely with these specialists at every step.

Psoriasis has a tendency to go into remission, but it can reoccur after even slight infections or environmental changes.

The most primary way to deal with psoriasis in children is to educate them. Since a child will probably grow up suffering from minor or major outbreaks, he or she must be equipped with sufficient information to deal with it.

Psoriasis can severely affect the mental makeup of a child. It is up to the parents to educate them to cope with it.

It is crucial that parents explain what the disease is and reassure the child that it is mostly not life-threatening.

The child must also know how to handle and be aware of what might trigger the outbreak. Parents must dispel myths that the child and people around him may have about the disease:

Psoriasis is not contagious and can't be brought on by hygiene issues.

It is curable and some medication and lifestyle modifications can really help.

Good information can help the child deal with his condition much better.

Part-IX: Introduction and Understanding Psoriasis

28. How to Diagnosis Psoriasis

If you suspect that you have psoriasis, visit your doctor, who will first undertake a physical examination of the affected area. The doctor may recommend a biopsy of the affected area. The biopsy can rule out other skin afflictions and confirm psoriasis.

Often, there is a change in the affected person's nails that can mark the onset of psoriasis. There may be depression around the nails but this cannot only be attributed solely to psoriasis.

The person's scalp may be flaky, resembling a strong dandruff problem rather than psoriasis. It is difficult to confirm psoriasis in the early stages. It is only later, when the skin becomes rough and scaly with red areas, that the doctors can confirm the presence of psoriasis.

In some people, the joints may be affected - leading to a diagnosis of arthritis. However, this could be a case of psoriatic arthritis, which cannot be confirmed - even with a blood test. This is because the test results do not indicate rheumatism and the ESR is within the normal limits.

The doctor may confuse it for gout because of the increased uric acid levels.

Therefore, the doctor may recommend an x-ray to locate the exact cause of arthritis, or he may recommend tests to rule out fungal infections.

If the psoriasis-affected area has pus, a detailed biopsy is advisable. Prior to this, the doctor will closely examine the texture and the type of swelling in the afflicted area.

It is a good idea to undertake the recommended tests for psoriatic arthritis before the disease worsens. Get a bone scan to detect the extent of bone loss and joint damage, to start remedial action immediately.

Do not ignore symptoms of lethargy and inflamed joints. You may suffer from stiff joints and swollen tendons.

Check for excessive rigidity in joints early in the morning and bend your limbs to check for flexibility. Examine your nails closely since any redness may be an indication of psoriasis.

You may have repeated bouts of conjunctivitis that can be an indicator of psoriasis.

Psoriatic arthritis may affect your back, wrist, and fingers. However, remember that arthritis usually follows some skin afflictions, so share the details of all your infections with your doctor for a proper and correct diagnosis.

Flaky psoriasis can affect a person's scalp for many years and bleed when there is excessive itching which causes excessive scratching. The affected area becomes red.

Mild cases may be effectively treated with moisturizers to keep the skin hydrated and to prevent some of the itching caused by excessive dryness.

You may cure a scalp infection with effective shampoos and medicated lotions containing steroids and Vitamin D.

If the ears show signs of psoriasis, use a mild ointment around the affected area. Psoriasis on the abdomen region can be due to a bacterial infection.

The doctor may undertake a throat culture to rule out this infection. Sometimes you may have to undergo tests to rule out fungal infections.

The first moment that you find scaly, red patches on your body, visit the doctor for a proper diagnosis. He will recommend the proper tests to single out the cause of psoriasis. This could give you relief from the affliction if you follow the recommended course of medicines prescribed by the doctor.

Part-X: Diagnosis of Psoriasis

29. Some Tips to Reduce Psoriasis Events

Psoriasis is a skin infection that can occur at any age due to various factors that may include climatic conditions, heredity and lifestyle habits like smoking and consuming alcohol.

Psoriasis can affect your limbs, joints, and face.

It appears in the form of smooth silver patches or red patches that may be flaky and/or inflamed. Several things can trigger an attack of psoriasis. Therefore, it is advisable to be familiar with the causes of psoriasis and to take remedial steps to overcome this affliction.

Psoriasis severely affects a person's self-confidence, and they may feel ugly. During this difficult time, the family and friends of the affected person must adopt a sympathetic approach to help the person overcome his discomfort.

Psoriasis can come and go, and the intensity depends on many factors. Today, there are good medicines and creams to treat psoriasis fairly effectively.

Psoriasis can cause psoriatic arthritis. It affects the ears, scalp, and nail beds (they may become red, as in the case of a fungal infection.)

Consult your doctor for proper diagnosis and medication if the lesions become filled with pus. The doctor will physically examine the affected area and send a piece of the lesion for biopsy for further diagnosis.

Psoriasis can flare up if you become stressed or anxious, so remain in a calm frame of mind.

Tell the doctor if you take drugs like aspirin and ibuprofen, since drug interactions can sometimes trigger psoriasis. Do not scratch the affected area as it can lead to further infection and cause you tremendous discomfort.

Sometimes, an insect bite or a burn can result in psoriasis.

Though the sun is good for health, avoid excessive exposure to the sun as sunburn can aggravate your psoriasis. Wear loose, comfortable clothing that is made from natural fibers like cotton that allow air circulation and keep you cool even in the hot summer.

Bathe with lukewarm water for a short time. Very hot water can dry your skin, causing more itching. Bathe with neutral soap and use a moisturizer within three minutes of your bath. This locks in the moisture and hydrates your skin.

Use a moisturizer regularly and, in summer, use a lighter moisturizer without alcohol. Use unscented soap if you have sensitive skin.

Scents may damage your skin when it is already affected with psoriasis.

Add oils to your bathwater to soften the skin.

If possible, maintain your weight and exercise regularly. Maintain proper hygiene and wear clean and loose fitting clothes.

If possible, humidify your home so that your skin remains hydrated. Avoid harsh and cold climates - stick to warmer temperatures.

Unless your doctor prescribes them, do not take medicines like beta-blockers that can aggravate psoriasis.

Try to avoid throat infections, since this can lead to a build up of psoriasis - especially in children.

The type and treatment of psoriasis differs from person to person. So, you must be aware of what suits you and take steps to protect yourself from further skin damage.

You must always consult your doctor for a customized medication and treatment plan that will best suit you. Try to incorporate a healthy lifestyle, including moderate exercise and a nutritious diet of vitamins and vegetables, like legumes and beans, that will help your skin.

Moreover, once you know the triggers, keep away from them to reduce attacks of psoriasis.

Part-XI: Treatment of Psoriasis

30. Treatment Options for Psoriasis

Psoriasis is a skin condition that results in redness, itching and flaky skin along with thickening of the skin in the affected area. This is a serious condition and you must visit a doctor for proper diagnosis and treatment so that your condition has every chance to improve.

The doctor will study the affected area, gauge the intensity of the psoriasis and then may ask you to undergo blood tests if it is not a clear case of psoriasis.

The doctor will conduct a detailed investigation and ask you about your lifestyle, genetics and habits, as well as the presence of other medical conditions before prescribing medication and treatment.

The treatment depends on the severity of psoriasis, your gender, general health and your mental attitude. Mild psoriasis generally responds well to treatment of ointments and moisturizers. The doctor may advise you to stop treatment once the symptoms disappear as long-term use of even steroidal ointments might make your skin brittle.

Treatment of moderate psoriasis might include the use of a combination of exposure to beneficial ultraviolet rays and topical treatment.

For severe cases of psoriasis, the doctor could recommend an oral dose of antibiotics. However, psoriasis may not respond as well to the same treatment after some time. So, your doctor needs to

monitor your response to the treatment. If you do not get the desired results, he may have to change the treatment.

You must have a lot of patience and trust in your doctor and the medication to battle psoriasis. You must have a strong willpower as this disease can greatly alter your external appearance, hurting your self-confidence.

The first step of psoriasis treatment involves applying the suggested ointments to the affected area, to reduce the swelling and the flakiness of the skin.

Most of the ointments are corticosteroids, retinoids or vitamin D supplements. Do not apply these strong ointments to the face or to your sensitive areas.

Pregnant women must also avoid use of these creams as they may have adverse side effects on the child. Some agents remove the scale deposits on the skin, while others - like coal tar - are used with light therapy for optimum results.

Exposure to light therapy may help to improve functioning of the immune system. You can undergo treatment in a controlled atmosphere for short lengths of time. Another mode of exposure is to treat the affected area to concentrated ultraviolet light with the help of tubes, so that the normal skin is not exposed to unnecessary radiation.

When undergoing radiation therapy, always follow the prescribed precautions:

Protect yourself from excessive sunlight as it can cause skin cancer. Use proper glasses to protect your eyes from exposure to ultraviolet rays during treatment. Radiation therapy works best with certain topical applications, so consult your doctor for the optimum therapy.

People that have severe psoriasis must take oral medicines for effective treatment and most of these medicines may have serious side-effects on the liver and kidneys. So, they must continuously undergo blood and liver tests to rule out any damage during the course of this treatment.

Pregnant women, and all those of childbearing age, must not undergo this therapy as it might severely affect the unborn child.

Consult your doctor about the side-effects of these medicines before starting this therapy:

If you take retinoids, it can result in chapped lips and cracking skin.

Some medicines affect the liver functioning and reduce the manufacture of blood cells, resulting in anemia.

A course of Cyclosporins might harm your kidneys and lead to hypertension. Persons with a weak immune system must avoid this medicine.

Some psoriasis medication reduces cell formation and growth, so it must not be taken by pregnant women.

Other medicines decrease duplication of DNA in the skin resulting in anemia and reduced immunity.

Some possible, milder side effects include nausea and diarrhea.

Fortunately, the scene is changing and, with increasing research, a better class of drugs with fewer side effects is being produced today.

These drugs are proteins that affect the immune system and aim to correct psoriasis. But, you must still follow your doctor's specific instructions and take great care before trying these medicines, as there may be undiscovered potential side-effects that we are still unaware of.

You can also try alternative therapies for treatment of psoriasis along with your prescribed medication. Just ensure that these therapies do not clash with your existing medication.

Some people feel that adopting a healthy lifestyle can control or reduce psoriasis. This involves stopping smoking, giving up alcohol and following disciplined eating habits. You must lead a calm life free from anxiety to help to control your psoriasis. This treatment can actually be effective for milder forms of psoriasis some times.

Treatment for psoriasis involves managing the disease and minimizing it since there are no real cures for it. You may succeed in putting your psoriasis into remission, but it may return.

Never discontinue a treatment midway and always share all results and reactions with your doctor.

Treating psoriasis requires proper evaluation and follow-up of the treatments. Your doctor may change the course of treatment depending on the responses.

Be mentally prepared for a long-term treatment. That will need a lot of patience.

Part-XII: Natural Remedies for Psoriasis

31. Natural Remedies to Reduce the Effects

Psoriasis is a skin condition that forms thick scales on your skin.

These scaly patches become inflamed and red in color. Psoriasis is due to certain allergies among other causes, stress and emotional upheavals also play their part by aggravating the disease.

There is no specific medical treatment at this time that can cure psoriasis.

You can adopt different natural remedies to reduce the incidence of the disease. These remedies do not offer a cure but ease the situation and may lessen your pain.

These remedies and therapies are not substitutes for your medical prescriptions either. You might supplement the medicines with the therapies to get relief from psoriatic lesions and patches but always thoroughly check them with your doctor before trying them.

Natural remedies used to help psoriasis sufferers include:

Yoga

Yoga is intended to promote the total well-being of your body. It involves stretching, regulated breathing, meditation and different exercises in various postures.

These different postures may help relax your muscles and pushes stress out of the body. Meditation and regulated breathing improves blood circulation in your body. It also lowers your stress levels and improves the flexibility of your body.

You may find immense relief from pain as present in psoriatic arthritis.

It may also improves your total physical and mental well-being.

Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program, such as Yoga, to be sure that your body is able to take the stretching and other movements involved. Many people are injured when first trying Yoga.

Massage

Massage therapy is now gaining increased popularity and acceptance among medical communities as a helpful treatment option. Massage therapists use their hands to massage across the various stress points of your body. This may relieve muscular tension, relax muscles and lower your stress so that you feel a lot better.

Regular massage sessions may lower your pain.

There are many different kinds of massage like reflexology, Swedish massage, shiatsu, deep tissue massage and acupressure. Your physical practitioner can guide you to the most effective massage for your psoriatic disease.

Meditation

Meditation may be a very effective tool to help with some serious illnesses. Meditation involves focusing all your energy and concentration on any particular object or image in mind. You could meditate on a single phrase or prayer for a long time. This may

make you oblivious to your surroundings, sounds and any pain or physical feelings for the time you meditate.

Such meditation may have deep effects on the functioning of your mind and sensory nerves. Your pain may decrease and you could feel emotionally high. Your inner body functions - like respiration rate, flow of blood to major body organs, functioning of muscles and muscular tension may reduce and attain desirable levels.

Such an overall feeling of well-being makes you a calm person. You also may not feel or suffer from the same amount of any pains that are due to psoriasis.

You also can more readily accept psoriasis as a skin condition and do not harbor any qualms about it.

Sun and water therapy

Sunlight is a natural healer and water may have some healthful properties too. A therapy combining the two may deliver positive results. Water can soften psoriatic lesions. Exposing your skin to regular sunlight can lessen the color change of psoriatic lesions. Sometimes sunlight can also clear psoriatic plaques.

Balneotherapy

This therapy uses water from hot springs, natural thermal springs, seawater, or mineral water to treat your psoriasis ailment. Although this therapy is relatively new in the United States, it is common in Asia and Europe.

Climatotherapy

Climatotherapy refers to a combination of natural air and water as present in certain climatic zones of the world. Certain specific oceans and water bodies are believed, or claimed, to have many curative powers. These may prove helpful in treating psoriasis. Many therapists refer to the Dead Sea in Israel, which has the ideal combination of natural environmental elements with a highly therapeutic value to psoriasis patients.

Ayurvedic medicine

This ancient healing branch of medicine has been in existence for over five thousand years. The main theme of healing through Ayurvedic medicine is concentration on your diet, lifestyle and thinking. These can help you achieve an ideal balance and build up your inner body resistance. This branch of medicine has a separate treatment plan and chart of action for every type of illness.

Ayurvedic medicine suggests topical application of specific oils like mustard and sesame to psoriasis patches, dietary guidelines, reducing and eliminating stress, fasting and regular physical exercises to control and treat psoriasis.

Chinese medicine

This branch of medicine that is practiced by the Chinese involves the use of specific herbs in individual combinations as the therapist decides what is suitable for individual patients. These herbal medicines are available in topical and oral forms. Although these do ease the symptoms and pain of psoriasis, you should be careful

while using herbs as a remedy. Some herbs can make your skin more sensitive to ultraviolet rays.

Self-Care with Natural products

Even if you use many different natural treatments for healing your psoriasis, a few simple home treatments may ease the situation to some degree:

Eat a good and nutritious diet and avoid all types of junk food.

Bathe and soak in warm water with coal tar solutions, Epsom salts, oil or oiled oatmeal to reduce inflammation of your psoriasis-affected scaly skin.

Use thick and greasy moisturizers regularly to reduce inflammation and scales on your skin.

Expose your psoriasis lesions to sunlight for a brief period everyday. However, do not stay in the sunlight for long and stay away from harsh sunlight. Ideally, the early morning sun is the best.

Exercise

Exercise is not a 'natural remedy' but it may help to ease most medical problems. It may be helpful in lessening your psoriatic lesions and pain. Different stretching exercises and motion exercises could improve the movement of your muscles and ease the pain in psoriatic joints.

Part-XIII: Coping with Psoriasis

32. The Impact of Psoriasis

Psoriasis is an allergic skin condition. Your skin becomes itchy, scaly and red in color. Psoriasis is not contagious or infectious. It is a specific skin condition with no permanent remedy. It can occur to anyone at any time of their lives. Often, public ignorance is the root cause for most of the problems of psoriasis-affected individuals.

Psoriasis has far-reaching impacts on various spheres of life:

Embarrassment - Psoriasis is often the cause of many embarrassing situations. Friends and other people should avoid treating you like an outcast so that you feel angry and helpless.. Psoriasis is not contagious.

Psychological - Psoriasis can make you feel very lonely and isolated, depressed and sad. This causes extreme stress, which often increases the intensity of psoriasis. Constantly worrying about psoriasis reduces the effectiveness of your treatment.

Self-confidence - Lack of acceptance by society lowers your self-confidence. More than fifty percent of people are ignorant of the facts about the disease. However, they treat sufferers as untouchables, which make them feel incomplete and incapable.

Relationships - Psoriasis also affects your sexual life, especially for single individuals. Married individuals also experience anxiety and worry in their intimate moments with their partner.

Family - Psoriasis could be due to genetic problems. So, psoriasis-affected parents may often feel guilty of passing it on to their children.

School/Workplace - Visible psoriasis is often problematic for you at your school or workplace.

33. Psoriasis and Diet

Psoriasis is a skin disease that may occur due to allergies. Allergies often have a direct relation to your dietary intake. So, following a definite diet pattern may have benefits in regard to efficient management of your psoriasis.

A balanced diet, with lots of fresh vegetables and fruits is always desirable. However, emphasizing certain specific vegetables, oils, and nuts may help to combat psoriasis.

Helpful Foods

Beta-carotene rich vegetables and fruits like carrots, green leafy vegetables, mangos and apricots are rich in vitamin A and therefore nourish your skin.

These foods are also rich in antioxidants, which improves the body immune system. A healthy immune system can reduce the occurrence of psoriasis.

Omega-3 rich fatty acids, such as are found in fish like salmon, trout, tuna sardines, and mackerel, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds and flaxseed oil can benefit you. These omega-3 rich foods form anti-inflammatory substances in your body that may help to combat the incidence of the disease.

Breads, breakfast cereals and yeast extracts with folic acid can reduce any vitamin deficiency. Additionally, you may get your supply of folic acid from cabbage, broccoli, sprouts and other green leafy vegetables. Lack of sufficient zinc is believed to contribute to the occurrence of psoriasis. You can supplement your body's zinc

supply through eating some shellfish and wholegrain foods that are rich in zinc. Bitter gourd, boiled vegetables, curd and pumpkin should be an essential part of your daily diet.

Foods to Avoid

You should not emphasize red meats, sausages, cold cuts, pre-spiced meats, pickles, spices or any type of animal fats and dairy products. Canned foods and eggs peppers, pastries, chocolates and chocolate-based products can cause irritation in the intestinal tract and possibly lead to more psoriasis outbreaks.

Some psoriatic patients develop sensitivity to gluten and gluten-based products. You should therefore be cautious about rye, wheat and barley.

Alcohol can increase the incidence of psoriasis. All types of red and white wines, cognac, brandy, champagnes, sherry, vermouth, and nut based liqueurs, and sparkling wines may have a negative effect for psoriasis patients.

Citrus fruits like limes, grapefruit, lemon, bitter lemons, fruit peels and prepared juices, lemonade, and orange marmalade should be out of your diet.

Certain vegetable like eggplant, tomatoes, paprika and white potatoes could affect psoriasis patients.

Additionally, your skin could improve if you work on reducing your overall weight. A regular exercise pattern for all parts of your body, coupled with regular walking and jogging can bring a marked, positive change in your skin pattern and its texture.

Ideally, an overall healthy and balanced diet can reduce the incidence of psoriasis. Also, developing a cool and calm composure and planning your day well in advance to avoid any last minute hassles and consequent stress is advised though, of course, not easy.

Avoiding stress is very good for combating psoriasis.

34. Living with Psoriasis

Psoriasis is an unpredictable ailment and there may be no warning before a flare-up that can occur suddenly at any place and time. Some flare-ups are mild and difficult to see, while other outbreaks are obvious for all to see. The incidence and severity of the flare-ups can be vary widely in different people.

There is no permanent cure for psoriasis and you have to be strong and bear the emotional effect of the disease.

Tackling Psoriasis

How can you best tackle the disease and suffer the least from its effects?

Be open with your family and friends and discuss the effects of the disease on you and your interactions. Most people are unaware of the facts we have presented about the disease in this book and form wrong opinions based on hearsay and myths. An open discussion can make things clearer to everybody and easier for you to handle any difficult situations later.

A frank discussion also brings your friends and family closer to you than before.

Avoid stress, like you would a dark alley. Stress boosts the negative effects of your psoriasis. Being open with friends, family, and colleagues can help to reduce your stress levels; you become more at peace with your condition and may not have so many embarrassing situations.

Your friends and colleagues may help you with awkward situations too. That helps to make you feel one with them. Then, you do not feel lonely or isolated.

You might form, or join, a support group. Psoriasis patients can come together to form a self-help forum. Talking with others that are affected by the disease can lighten the burden that it puts on your lives through sharing of your experiences.

You can talk to your doctor for any additional suggestions. Alternatively, you can discuss your desires, experiences and concerns with a counselor, social worker or a health-care provider.

Artificial and Temporary Camouflage

You can cover your arms and legs by wearing full-length clothes. Scarves and hats can prove helpful too. However, it is not possible to wear such clothes all the time.

There are certain cosmetic products that may help to cover your psoriasis scars in places where you cannot cover them with clothes. You can lessen the redness of the skin patches and cover the psoriasis lesions using reputable brands of cosmetics.

On a precautionary note, do not apply such makeup to any raw wound, unhealed cuts or irritated skin. Do not continue the use of any cosmetics if you suffer any reaction to them. Discuss the possible effectiveness and safety of various products with your doctor or pharmacist

It is not always possible to mask all your psoriasis lesions and, sometimes, particular ingredients in certain cosmetics might actually aggravate the situation.

Moisturizers may be effective in removing some of the redness and scaling of psoriasis scars. Keeping the scarred areas is essential.

Always respect your feelings regarding the emergence or spread of psoriasis. You do not have to accept any feeling of guilt for the occurrence of the disease.

Instead, accept it as a part of your life and go forward.

35. Winter Care of Psoriasis

Some people may like the winters for all the festivities it brings.

But, the millions of psoriasis patients may not agree. The winter months can be hard months for psoriasis patients.

For people that live in areas with long winters, dealing with psoriasis is a special challenge. Everything from the dry chilly air to the typical winter clothing is capable of giving psoriasis patients more irritating itches.

In addition, the shorter days mean lesser UV-B absorption and this may increase the chances of a psoriasis attack.

Most observers believe that psoriasis, brought on both by environmental causes as well as by infections, is much more pronounced in winters.

Patients just have to endure it, but these tips can be quite beneficial although the effects will vary with every individual:

The winter air is typically very dry; the low-pressure sucks the moisture from the air. That makes it harder for the skin to retain its natural moisture.

This dryness may be brutal on psoriasis patients. In winter, therefore, it is especially important that you always keep your skin heavily moisturized with creams.

Ideally, you should use a cream that is prescribed by your dermatologist since these are likely to be more effective than over the counter (OTC) cosmetic concoctions.

Even when you are continually indoors, make sure that you keep your moisturizer on.

Also, try to install a humidifier in your home and office to keep the dryness down.

If you think the amount of light that your skin is getting may be very low, ask your physician about artificial light therapy. This might help to slow down the excessive skin cell growth and reduce the incidence or some of the effects of a psoriasis outbreak.

Avoid very hot baths. These are very tempting but can severely aggravate your psoriasis.

Make sure that you wear loose fitting comfortable clothing, where possible, to avoid increased itching and aggravation.

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