

# 9 Things You Need to Do After a Psoriasis Diagnosis

Claire Gillespie HEALTH WRITER July 3, 2018



You finally have a psoriasis diagnosis, and you're not alone — it's estimated that as many as 7.5 million Americans have this autoimmune disease. While you're likely to feel relief that you have a name for the red, scaly patches that have caused you concern — and possibly a great deal of discomfort — for weeks or even months, you may be wondering how to start managing the condition. Here's what to do after a psoriasis diagnosis.



## Gather information

“Being diagnosed with any chronic medical condition can be scary,” **dermatologist Jeffrey Fromowitz, M.D.**, said in an email interview with HealthCentral. “The best way to deal with this is to educate yourself.” Online resources, such as the American Academy of Dermatology and National Psoriasis Foundation, have a wealth of information about psoriasis, covering everything from causes and triggers to treatment options and the latest research.



## Find a dermatologist

Working with a dermatologist is an important part of managing psoriasis. These experts on skin, nails, and hair are knowledgeable about psoriasis and the many therapies available to treat it. By getting connected with a specialist — and finding the treatment that's most appropriate — patients can manage their disease to the point where, in many cases, it has little impact on their daily life. For help finding a board-certified dermatologist in your area, visit the National Psoriasis Foundation Patient Navigation Center.



### Ask questions

If you haven't seen a dermatologist yet, prepare questions before your appointment. "You may be nervous at your visit and forget to address all of your concerns," said **Dr. Fromowitz**. "Preparing a list helps to avoid that." Ask your dermatologist about the different treatment options available to you and the potential side effects. Plus, ask for at-home tips to help you manage your psoriasis and keep your skin strong and healthy.



### Take care of your skin

Even before you get started on your treatment program, you can do plenty to take special care of your skin. **Dr. Fromowitz** recommends applying an emollient, such as AmLactin or CeraVe, to help with dryness and/or peeling skin. If your psoriatic areas are itchy, use an over-the-counter hydrocortisone for temporary relief until you get your prescription products. Sun exposure may also help to relieve discomfort and itching but remember to wear sunscreen.



### Prepare for the long haul

Psoriasis doesn't always follow a set pattern. It's common to experience flare-ups as well as periods that are free from outbreaks over many years. Practice good skin care even when you're not having a flare-up. Get into the habit of bathing in warm — not hot — water, using fragrance-free cleansers, and wearing non-irritating fabrics like cotton.

"Your treatment plan is a marathon, not a sprint," said **Dr. Fromowitz**. "Stay involved, be informed, and be an active participant."



### Reach out to others

Sharing your psoriatic experiences with people who can relate to what you're going through can help you cope with this chronic skin condition. Join the National Psoriasis Foundation "Psoriasis One to One" program to get matched with a peer mentor, join an online community and use its interactive message boards to meet and connect to other patients, or attend events in your local community designed to educate people about psoriasis and build relationships between patients.



### **Identify your triggers**

Many things can trigger psoriasis flare-ups, including stress, certain medications, illness, injury to the skin, weather conditions, hormones, smoking, and heavy alcohol consumption. By knowing what triggers a flare-up, you can make positive lifestyle choices and feel more in control of the disease.



### **Reduce stress**

Stress can be a trigger for many psoriasis patients. Take steps to reduce your stress levels by exercising regularly, eating healthily, drinking lots of water, and getting plenty of sleep. The National Sleep Foundation recommends seven to nine hours of sleep a night for adults age 26 to 64.



### **Get screened for psoriatic arthritis**

Up to 30 percent of psoriasis patients may develop psoriatic arthritis— a form of arthritis characterized by pain; swelling or stiffness in one or more joints; joints that are red or warm to the touch; swelling in one or more of the fingers or toes; pain in and around the feet and ankles; pain in the lower back above the tailbone; or changes to the nails, like pitting or separation from the nail bed. Use the PEST screening tool and discuss the results with your dermatologist.

<https://www.healthcentral.com/slideshow/things-you-need-to-do-after-a-psoriasis-diagnosis#slide=1>