



Managing Side-effects in Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis

Amber Specialty Pharmacy has expertise in the management and treatment of Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis. While there is no cure, there is a wide-range of specialty medications available today to effectively treat and manage these conditions. In addition to helping you with your medication needs, we have compiled tips and information on sleep, exercise, nutritional care and social activities to help you live well with your condition.



Injection Site Reaction

If you inject your medication, you may experience a mild injection site reaction. This can be mild swelling, redness, bruising, itching and/or pain at the injection site for a day or two after the injection. If you are experiencing a severe reaction or have any signs of infection, contact your doctor right away.

- ▶ If your nurse or pharmacist says it's okay, allow your medication to warm to room temperature before injecting. Don't use a heat source like warm water or a microwave to warm the medication. Simply take it out of the refrigerator about 20-30 minutes before injecting. Don't return the medication to the refrigerator once it has warmed to room temperature.
- ▶ After cleaning the site with alcohol wipes, let the skin dry first. Do not blow on the skin to dry the alcohol.
- ▶ Rotate injection sites. Move each injection several inches away from the previous injection site. Try writing down where injections are given instead of relying on your memory.
- ▶ If you have pain when injecting, apply ice to the injection site for 30-60 seconds before cleaning the site and injecting the medication.
- ▶ Avoid injection sites that are tender, reddened, scarred or bruised
- ▶ Talk to your doctor if the injection site reaction lasts more than 24-48 hours or if you have signs of infection.

Cold-like Symptoms

You may experience cold-like symptoms, depending on your medication. This includes a runny nose, sore throat or cough. Talk with your doctor about different medications that may be helpful in relieving some of these side effects. Your doctor may pause your psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis therapy if you are ill, so let your doctor know if you develop cold symptoms. If your symptoms do not improve, let your doctor know.

Rash

Both psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis and the medications used to treat these conditions can cause skin issues. Always tell your doctor if you notice any skin changes or a new rash. To prevent psoriasis areas from becoming infected, don't scratch your skin.

- ▶ Drink plenty of water.
- ▶ Apply moisturizer immediately after a shower or bath.
- ▶ Avoid showers or baths that are too hot.
- ▶ Take an oatmeal bath (one cup of oatmeal in a warm bath).
- ▶ Apply cold packs wrapped in a towel to itchy areas.
- ▶ Wear loose fitting clothes.
- ▶ Protect your skin from the sun with clothing or sunblock. Do not apply sunscreen to damaged or broken skin.

Headache

Some psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis medications may cause headaches.

- ▶ Take your medication at bedtime to sleep through the discomfort.
- ▶ Ask your healthcare provider if you are able to take pain relievers and which ones are best for you.
- ▶ Drink plenty of water.
- ▶ Don't drink caffeine.
- ▶ If you get a headache, keep the lights dim and avoid loud noises and strong smells. Rest and try to relax until the headache goes away.
- ▶ Seek medical attention if these tips don't relieve your headache or if the headache is severe.

Increased Risk of Infection

Your psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis medication may make you more at risk for infections. It's important you take steps to protect your immune system. If you think you have an infection, tell your healthcare provider right away. Symptoms of infection include but aren't limited to:

- Fever
- Chills or sweats
- Sore throat
- Trouble breathing

Symptoms to Report to your Doctor Immediately:

- Signs of an allergic reaction (hives, swelling of the face, eyes or lips, or difficulty breathing)
- Any new skin rash or skin changes
- New moles
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Trouble breathing, swelling of legs/feet, fluid retention
- Fatigue, yellow skin or eyes, vomiting, upper right abdominal pain
- Severe headache
- Severe depression or suicidal thoughts
- Unable to pass urine or blood in the urine

Infection Continued...

- Stuffy nose, cough or other cold symptoms
 - Redness, soreness or swelling in any area
 - Upset stomach
 - New onset of pain
 - Sores that will not heal
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- ▶ Use hand sanitizer and be sure to also wash your hands often with warm water and soap.
 - ▶ Avoid people who are sick.
 - ▶ Wash foods thoroughly before eating.
 - ▶ If you inject your medication, make sure the site is properly cleaned.

Depression and Anxiety

Depression may be a side effect of your psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis medication. People with anxiety often have depression and can feel irritable, restless and angry. Additional symptoms of depression include:

- Trouble thinking
- Fatigue or feeling tired
- Not wanting to eat/eating too much
- Feeling sad
- Feeling indifferent
- Feeling withdrawn or lonely

It's important to tell your doctor if you're feeling depressed or anxious. A positive attitude is important to your overall health and well-being. Talk with other people who have psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis by joining a support group.

- ▶ Stay active and avoid being alone.
- ▶ Get at least eight hours of sleep each night.
- ▶ Include exercise in your daily routine.
- ▶ Practice meditation each day and focus on a calm state of mind.
- ▶ Keep a journal of how you feel each day.
- ▶ Talk with your healthcare provider about your feelings to see if talking to a professional or additional medication may help you.

Nausea

- ▶ Drink and eat slowly.
- ▶ Try eating smaller meals more often.
- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids.
- ▶ Drink peppermint, chamomile or ginger tea.



Nausea Continued...

- ▶ Ginger helps reduce nausea and is available in your grocer's produce section. After rinsing the ginger, cut it into thin slices. Add the slices to cold water for a refreshing drink.
- ▶ Eat foods at room temperature.
- ▶ Avoid foods or food odors that may make you nauseous.
- ▶ Avoid greasy, fried or spicy foods.
- ▶ Try to get plenty of rest.
- ▶ Add a slice of lemon, lime, orange, mint or cucumber to your water for flavor.

Diarrhea

Some people experience diarrhea as a side effect of their medication. Diarrhea is frequent, loose or watery bowel movements and ranges from mild to severe. Diarrhea many times a day can make you weak and dehydrated. Don't be embarrassed to share concerns with your healthcare provider. Let them know if you have had diarrhea for over 24 hours.

- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids without caffeine (water, sports drinks, etc.).
- ▶ Eat small meals of soft, bland, low fiber foods - bananas, white bread, rice, applesauce, noodles or chicken.
- ▶ Avoid spicy or fatty foods.
- ▶ Avoid dairy or high sugar foods.
- ▶ Avoid high fiber foods - beans, whole grain breads and cereals, nuts, raw vegetables or fruits.

FAQs

What is psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a long-term autoimmune skin disorder that produces raised red, inflamed, itchy, patches on the skin. This occurs most commonly on the elbows, knees, trunk and scalp and varies in severity. These scaly patches can be seen as a few small spots to patches covering large areas. Psoriasis typically goes through cycles producing flares that can last weeks or months followed by periods where the disease subsides. Available treatments can help manage symptoms.

Plaque: The most common form of psoriasis causing dry, red scaled skin patches (lesions).

Nail: Impacts fingernails and toenails causing tiny pits, brown spots or thick crumbling nails. This form of psoriasis can even cause the nail to loosen from the nail bed,

Guttate: Small, dot-like patches of red skin on your arms, trunk and legs. This type of psoriasis is common in children and often linked to a bacterial infection like strep throat.

Pustular: This type of psoriasis can be severe and produces small pus-filled blisters on the skin.

Inverse: Inverse psoriasis causes red, smooth patches of skin found in the armpits, groin, under the breasts and other skin folds of the body.

Erythrodermic: This is the least common form of psoriasis. It causes a red peeling rash that can burn or itch.

What causes psoriasis?

It's not clear what causes psoriasis. Researchers believe it could be caused by immune, genetic or environmental factors. Most researchers agree that the immune system is somehow triggered, which speeds up the growth of skin cells. This causes dead skin to pile up, which appears as red, thickened, scaly skin. Factors that increase your risk include:

- One or both parents have psoriasis
- High stress levels
- Smoking not only increases our risk but will increase severity of the disease if you have it.

Is psoriasis contagious?

Psoriasis isn't contagious. It is hereditary. It's not something that you can "catch" or give to others.

Can psoriasis affect all parts of the body?

Psoriasis often appears on the scalp, knees, elbows and torso but it can develop anywhere. Often the lesions appear in the same place on the left and right sides of the body.



FAQs

What kind of treatments are available?

There is no cure for psoriasis but there are treatments that can clear psoriasis for periods of time. Creams can help slow the growth of skin and reduce inflammation. Biologic drugs may be prescribed for moderate to severe psoriasis. These medications are as oral medication, a subcutaneous injection or as an intravenous (IV) infusion.

Phototherapy, or exposure to ultraviolet light, is another treatment option. This type of treatment isn't for everyone, as UV radiation increases the risk of skin cancer. Getting regular sleep and maintaining a healthy diet can also help manage psoriasis.

Are there side effects from the medications?

Common side effects from biologics include:

- Rash
- Flu-like symptoms
- Injection site reactions

Biologics can also increase the risk of infection. If you develop signs of an infection, tell your doctor right away. This includes fever, cough, flu-like symptoms or any cuts/open sores.

How can I cope with psoriasis?

Living with psoriasis has unique challenges. Learning how to reduce stress, manage itch, keep your skin hydrated and cope with depression can help you manage your symptoms.

What is psoriatic arthritis?

Psoriatic arthritis is a type of arthritis that causes joint pain in people with psoriasis. Most people who develop psoriatic arthritis have the skin symptoms first, followed by arthritis pain. However, they can appear at the same time.

There are several types of psoriatic arthritis:

- **Distal arthritis:** This type affects the end joints of the fingers and toes.
- **Asymmetric oligoarthritis:** Affects fewer than five small or large joints in the body and limited to one side of the body. This form impacts nearly one-third of people with psoriatic arthritis.
- **Symmetric polyarthritis:** This is the most common form and impacts roughly half of all people with psoriatic arthritis. It affects five or more joints on both sides of the body.

- **Arthritis mutilans:** This type of psoriatic arthritis deforms and destroys the joints. It can cause the affected fingers and toes to shorten.
- **Spondyloarthropathy:** Inflammation affects the joints of the spine causing constant back pain. You can also sense stiffness and pain in your neck and shoulders.
- **Mutilans:** The rarest but most severe form damaging the small joints of your hands and feet and shortening fingers and toes due to bone loss.

What are the symptoms of psoriatic arthritis?

Symptoms of psoriatic arthritis often include:

- Pain in the joints.
- Trouble moving or stiffness in the joints or back.
- Nail issues, like pitted, discolored or crumbly nails.
- Swelling of the hands, feet, fingers or toes.
- Eye pain and redness.

What kind of treatments are available?

There are five main types of medications used to treat psoriatic arthritis.

- **Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).** These medications reduce pain and swelling. NSAIDs alone do not reduce joint damage. They are typically prescribed with other medications.
- **Glucocorticoid injections.** Glucocorticoids, also called steroids, relieve pain when injected into affected joints. Oral steroids are often not advised because they can cause a severe form of skin psoriasis.
- **Disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs).** DMARDs can slow the disease process by modifying the immune system. DMARDs are used both alone and with other medications.
- **Biologics.** These medications help relieve symptoms by targeting part of the immune system. Biologic response modifiers are injected or taken orally.
- **Immunosuppressants.** These medications help reduce inflammation by suppressing the body's immune system. It's important to keep in mind that this can make you more prone to infection.



Amber Specialty Pharmacy is here to help.

We offer guidance and support through our dedicated team of healthcare experts. From the beginning, we help you with the enrollment process and review your insurance coverage. We explore financial assistance opportunities to help you lower your medication costs whenever possible. Our pharmacists review your prescriptions with you - including how to take your medication and manage any side effects. Pharmacists are available 24/7 to assist you when you have questions. Our Registered Nurse and Registered Dietitian offer personalized consultations to assist you with any medically-based questions and nutritional care. We stay in touch with you regularly to remind you when it is time to refill your prescriptions. We are always here to help.

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