



EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF  
DERMATOLOGY AND VENEREOLOGY

# Information Leaflet for Patients

## PSORIASIS THROUGH LIFE

### **The aim of this leaflet**

*This leaflet is designed to help you understand more about the challenges of psoriasis according to different stages of life: when teenage, young, pregnant, or with age or menopause. It also shares advice about how to prepare for surgery.*

# PSORIASIS THROUGH LIFE

## Why do challenges in each phase of life need to be addressed differently?

Psoriasis can affect people of all ages, but usually develops between the ages of 20-30 or 50-60. Although symptoms are generally very similar between those affected, it affects everybody differently, depending on where they are at in life. Young people are often concerned with the way they look and how it affects their social life, adults usually complain about how it affects their career and family life, whereas older people worry how psoriasis affects their overall health. Each life phase has its own challenges, which are addressed differently. Psychological support may be required, and its positive impact should never be underestimated.

## How does psoriasis affect teenagers?

Teenagers with psoriasis may require intense psychological support. The impact of a chronic skin disease may take its toll, as teenagers highly value a social life. It may be tiresome to hide the spots, so in the end it will pay off if you're honest about your psoriasis from the start. It is important to talk about psoriasis with your family, friends, boy/girlfriends, and your school. Teenagers should not be afraid of taboos, as it is usually an age where you're supposed to break them. Don't be afraid to talk about psoriasis as if you were talking about homework. At such a young age, it is important to realize that you're not alone: talk about your frustrations and fears with your parents, friends, or a psychologist. The biggest issue for teenagers is that often your problems may seem overwhelming because you're still inexperienced at life, but most of the time your problems can be dealt with: talk about your worries.

Regarding skin care, it's important to find a routine suitable for your skin. If you have acne, avoid harsh products that may irritate your skin and opt for mild products. Talk to your dermatologist to find a routine that tackles both your acne and psoriasis in a comfortable way. Although psoriasis may require more time and attention, it shouldn't hold you back for extracurricular activities. A healthy lifestyle is essential to keep your psoriasis under control, both now and in the future. But most of all, you're young: enjoy while you can!

## How does psoriasis affect young adults?

Young adults are mostly occupied by their studies, starting a career, and being on the lookout for a romantic partner. The psychological impact of these challenges in combination with psoriasis should not be underestimated and are best countered by open discussions. If you feel that your environment is not open to discuss psoriasis with, talk to your clinician or a psychologist. Be aware that although you're in the prime of your life, it is essential to have a healthy lifestyle: healthy habits are key to controlling your psoriasis and its comorbidities.

Young adults with psoriasis have an increased risk for future cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. Healthy habits include regular exercise, balanced diet, and avoidance of cigarettes and excessive drinking.

If you experience anxiety or a lot of stress and you feel this leads to flares, it is important to address the underlying issue. This may include learning to be organized (e.g. avoid procrastination), including yoga or mindfulness in your daily routine, or signing up for a stress management course. You can confront your performance anxiety by seeking help from a psychologist. When you start working, it is best to be open about psoriasis and not to treat it as a mystery – this will only add to the stigmatization. Similarly for dating, don't let psoriasis hold you back. Moreover, your partner is more likely to accept your psoriasis when you can talk about it and accept it yourself.

## How does psoriasis affect pregnant women?

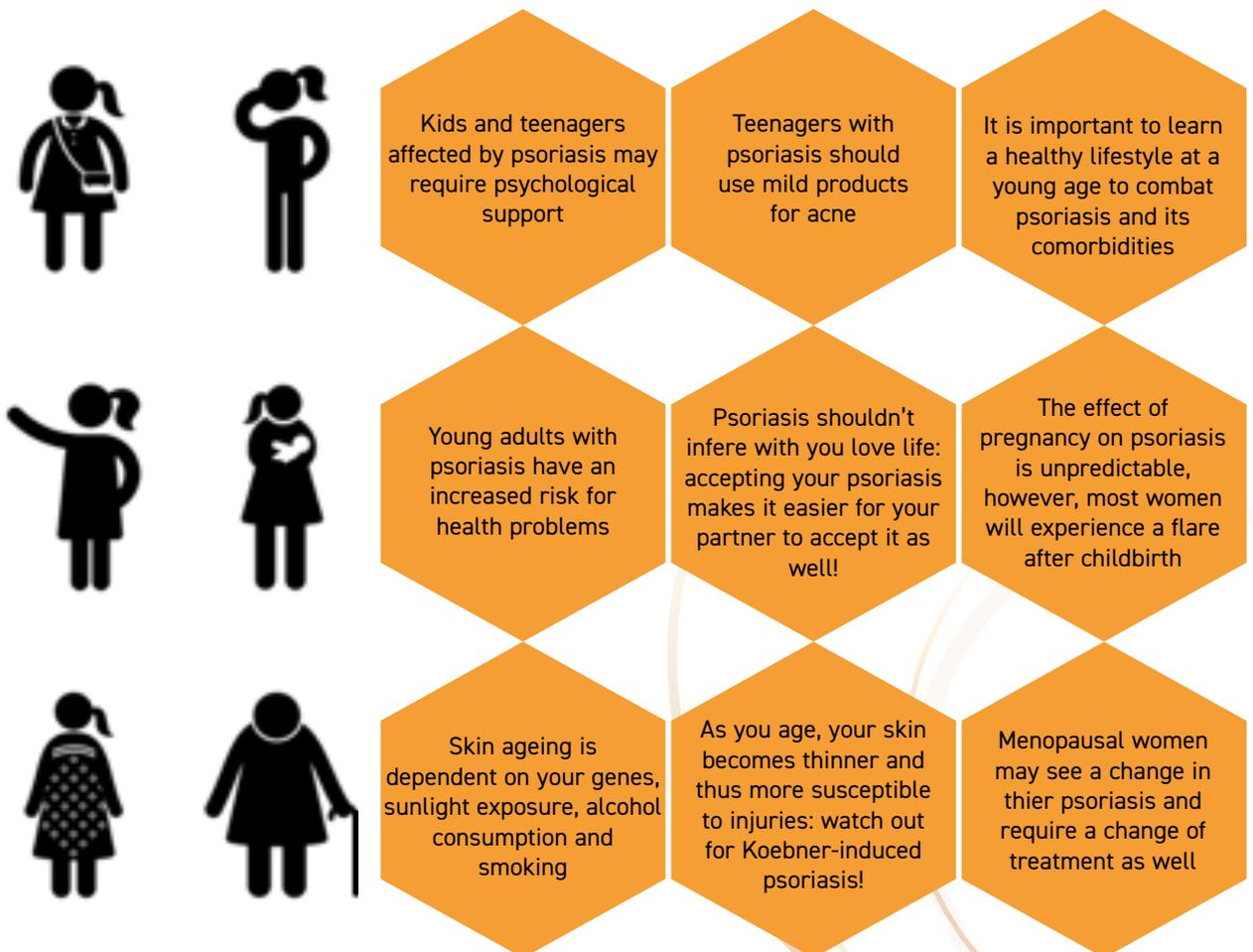
If you are actively trying to become pregnant, you should discuss this with your dermatologist. Make sure that your treatment is not getting in the way, whether you're the mother- or father-to-be. Discuss your case with your dermatologist and gynaecologist. Some anti-psoriasis treatments can affect the development of the foetus and must be avoided when pregnancy is desired. For some drugs, you need to be drug-free for up to 2 years before you can get pregnant. However, this doesn't mean that you can't treat psoriasis while trying to get pregnant. Having severe psoriasis during pregnancy may lead to a lower birth weight. Talk to your dermatologist to find a treatment that controls your psoriasis and doesn't pose a threat to a successful pregnancy.

Are you pregnant? Congratulations! It is, however, difficult to predict how your

psoriasis will behave during pregnancy; most women find relief, but some may experience a flare. After childbirth, flares are not unusual. If you're suffering from genital psoriasis and you don't want a caesarean section, talk to your dermatologist and gynaecologist so they may offer you a suitable solution.

## How does psoriasis affect skin ageing?

Skin care may differ from person to person, but can change throughout life. Skin ageing is dependent on external factors such as sun exposure, tobacco, and alcohol consumption. However, internal factors such as your genetic composition also play a role in how your skin ages. But what is skin ageing? With time, your skin will become thinner and lose elasticity. In addition, its healing capacities will diminish due to reduced blood supply, and the sebaceous and sweat glands will decrease in numbers and activity, leading to drier skin.



# PSORIASIS THROUGH LIFE

Subsequently, aged skin is more sensitive to infections and injuries, increasing the risk for the “Koebner-phenomenon.” Avoid injuries and allow your skin to have more time to heal. Always moisturize your skin.

Always choose your skin care in view of what suits you best: gels and lotions contain much more alcohol and are therefore not desirable if you already have dry skin. Instead, opt for creams in that case. Furthermore, adapt your treatments to your skin needs as well: older and thus thinner skin doesn't need highly-concentrated corticosteroids. Also, make sure to talk to your doctor about other drugs you're currently taking; he/she will make sure to avoid combinations of drugs that may interact with one another.

In case of hair colouration, know how this affects your scalp. If you suffer from scalp psoriasis, make sure to take extra care of your scalp on the day you'll dye your hair by treating your scalp as recommended by your clinician. Do not wash your hair with shampoo 24 hours prior to using a hair dye. Ask your hair stylist to be careful and not to scratch your scalp in order to avoid irritation and injuries.

## How does psoriasis affect menopause?

Menopausal women may experience worsening of psoriasis, as well as women who have undergone hysterectomy (removal of the uterus and ovaries). Scientists presume this is due to the reduction of oestrogen, yet this does not explain why not all pregnant women experience improvements when their oestrogen peaks. However, for the moment there isn't sufficient evidence that hormone replacement therapies improve psoriasis in menopausal women. Nevertheless, if you feel that your psoriasis is acting differently, it may be time to reconsider some previous treatment options that failed before menopause. ■

## What if you need surgery?

Ask your clinician's advice, as perhaps it may be best to stop your treatment before surgery to optimize the healing process after surgery. If possible, try to plan the surgery when your psoriasis is clear or stable to avoid the development of a “Koebner phenomenon” at the site of the scar tissue.



EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF  
DERMATOLOGY AND VENEREOLOGY

*While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given in this leaflet is accurate, not every treatment will be suitable or effective for every person. Your own clinician will be able to advise in greater detail.*

PRODUCED BY THE EADV PSORIASIS TASK FORCE  
WITH THE COLLABORATION OF THE FLEMISH PSORIASIS LEAGUE