

A practical guide to living well with psoriasis

## Top Tips Cards

See Psoriasis: Look Deeper is organised and funded by AbbVie Ltd.



## Why we created the Small Steps programme

Have you ever wondered what small, positive changes to your lifestyle might make a difference to your psoriasis?

We asked people with psoriasis what useful lifestyle changes they had made and whether they would be willing to share them with others with the condition. The survey was conducted online with 78 people living with psoriasis; all of whom were required to confirm they had been diagnosed with psoriasis by a healthcare professional. Participants were recruited through the Psoriasis Association between August-September 2017. Individuals under the age of 16 were not able to participate in the survey.

Three out of four respondents to our See Psoriasis: Look Deeper survey had made small, positive changes to their lifestyle to help better manage their psoriasis.<sup>1</sup>

We've included some of their suggestions here. If you think you might like to give one or more of these Small Steps a try, tear out the postcard from the booklet and leave it somewhere you can see it on a regular basis.

Maybe taking just one of these Small Steps could make a difference to you.

1. AbbVie Data on File 171427



Small Step 1:

**Eating more healthily was found to be helpful in managing psoriasis symptoms<sup>1</sup>**



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More than half of the survey respondents saw improvements in their psoriasis when they cut down on certain foods, particularly when they reduced the amount of processed, sugary or fatty food they ate.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is the scientific evidence behind this Small Step?**

Eating a healthy diet is beneficial to everyone. But cutting back on those foods that are known to increase inflammation in the body may be especially helpful to your psoriasis.<sup>2</sup> For example, reducing the amount of sugar and unhealthy fat you eat and increasing the amount of whole grains, colourful vegetables, olive oil and nuts, and protein in the form of cold water fish, such as salmon, mackerel or trout, has been shown to improve the severity of psoriasis.<sup>2</sup> But remember, if you are thinking of making a major change to your diet, such as cutting out certain foods completely, you should consult your doctor.

1. AbbVie Data on File 171427; 2. Barrea L, et al. Int J Environ Res Public Health 2016;13:743–755.



Small Step 2:

**Reducing your alcohol consumption could help you better manage your psoriasis<sup>1</sup>**



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One third of our survey respondents found changing their alcohol consumption to be helpful to their psoriasis. It need not be drastic – just reducing intake a little at a time had a positive impact on psoriasis for some.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is the scientific evidence behind this Small Step?**

The relationship between alcohol and psoriasis is complex. As alcohol stimulates the release of a chemical called histamine, skin problems can sometimes be aggravated by drinking.<sup>2</sup> Studies suggest that alcohol may reduce your response to treatment or chance of remission.<sup>3</sup> A recent study looking at factors that worsened patients' experience of psoriasis, alcohol was highlighted as a trigger for symptoms or worsening of disease.<sup>4</sup>

1. AbbVie Data on File 171427; 2. Wolters M. Diet and psoriasis: experimental data and clinical evidence *Br J Dermatol* 2005;153:706–714; 3. Sarkar R, et al. *Indian Dermatol Online J* 2016;7:481–488; 4. Pariser D, et al. *J Dermatolog Treat* 2016;27(1):19–26.



Small Step 3:

**Increasing your level of physical activity or trying a new activity could be helpful<sup>1</sup>**



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One in three survey respondents said that being more active in general made a difference to their psoriasis. Taking up new activities such as swimming, running or walking also helped people better cope with the condition.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is the scientific evidence behind this Small Step?**

The benefit of increased physical activity on psoriasis symptoms may be two-fold. Studies show that exercise has a positive influence on both overall physical wellbeing and severity of disease, especially when linked to weight loss.<sup>2-4</sup> Even small changes in physical activity, for example walking three times a week, can help to reduce the severity of psoriasis.<sup>3</sup> Regular exercise may also prove beneficial in reducing levels of anxiety and stress, both of which are known to affect psoriasis severity.<sup>2,4</sup>

1. AbbVie Data on File 171427; 2. Balato N, et al. *J EADV* 2015;29:515–520; 3. Naldi L, et al. *Br J Dermatol* 2014;170(3):634–642; 4. Schmitt-Egenolf M. *Br J Dermatol* 2016;175:452–453.





Small Step 4:

**Losing a small amount of weight may help severity of psoriasis<sup>1</sup>**





Around 15% of survey respondents found that losing weight helped them to better manage their psoriasis.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is the scientific evidence behind this Small Step?**

Clinical studies show that being overweight is linked to increased severity of psoriasis as well as a reduction in the effectiveness of medical treatment.<sup>2-5</sup> Achieving weight loss through a reduction in calorie intake appears to have a beneficial effect on disease severity and quality of life.<sup>2,4,5</sup> A study involving more than 300 patients showed that even a small reduction in weight, achieved by reducing calorie intake and increasing physical activity, can lead to a reduction in psoriasis severity.<sup>5</sup>

1. AbbVie Data on File 171427; 2. Debanneh M, et al. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2014;71(1):133–140; 3. Barrea L, et al. *Int J Environ Res Public Health* 2016;13:743–755; 4. Jensen P, Zachariae C, Christensen R et al. *JAMA Dermatol* 2013; 149:795–801; 5. Naldi L, et al. *Br J Dermatol* 2014;170(3):634–642.



Small Step 5:

**Recognising the need to talk about the impact of anxiety and depression on your day-to-day life**



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We know that many people with psoriasis experience high levels of anxiety or depression. Around 15% of our survey respondents looked for emotional support from a partner or family member, other people with psoriasis, or a healthcare professional or counsellor.<sup>1</sup> Everyone feels down or anxious from time to time, but if this becomes persistent and impacts on your day to day life then it is important to raise it with your doctor.

### **What is the scientific evidence behind this Small Step?**

Evidence suggests that patients with psoriasis are at increased risk for depression.<sup>2,3</sup> Studies show that developing a support system involving friends, family, counsellors or doctors lessens the negative impact of psoriasis on quality of life. It can also reduce depression and disease severity.<sup>4,5</sup>

1. AbbVie Data on File 171427; 2. Cohen BE, et al. JAMA Dermatol 2016;152(1):73–79; 3. Dowlatshahi EA, et al. J Invest Dermatol 2014;134(6):1542–1551; 4. Janowski K, et al. Arch Dermatol Res 2012;304:421–32; 5. Picardi A, et al. Psychosomatics 2005;46:556–64.



Small Step 6:

**Stress management techniques or time out doing something you enjoy may help to reduce stress<sup>1</sup>**



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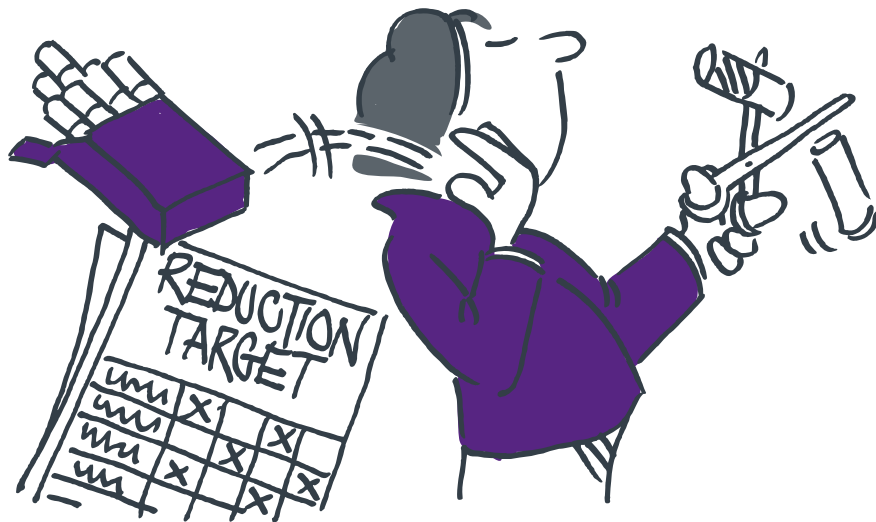


Almost a quarter of survey respondents said that specific stress management approaches or improvements to overall wellbeing helped their psoriasis. Daily meditation or mindfulness, relaxation using yoga and Pilates, and painting or writing, were described as helpful by some of our respondents.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is the scientific evidence behind this Small Step?**

Emotional stress can increase the likelihood of worsening psoriasis.<sup>2,3</sup> Studies show that techniques such as mindfulness or meditation may help improve anxiety, depression or stress and reduce psoriasis severity.<sup>4,5</sup> Taking steps to reduce stress, either by using relaxation or mindfulness techniques or doing something that you enjoy, may help you better manage your psoriasis.<sup>5</sup>

1. AbbVie Data on File 171427; 2. Sarkar R, et al. Indian Dermatol Online J 2016;7:481–488; 3. Heller MM, et al. Skin Therapy Letter 2011;16(5):1-4; 4. Rieder E, et al. Int J Dermatology 2012;51:12–26; 5. Montgomery K, et al. Br J Dermatol 2016;175:930–936.



Small Step 7:

**Cutting down on your smoking may help improve the severity of your psoriasis<sup>1</sup>**





One in eight of our respondents found reducing or stopping smoking to be helpful to their psoriasis.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is the scientific evidence behind this Small Step?**

Studies suggest an association between smoking and an increase in risk of developing psoriasis, poorer treatment outcomes and increase in psoriasis severity.<sup>2,3</sup> A case review of 66 patients with moderate-to-severe psoriasis who were either active smokers or non-smokers showed that smoking fewer than 10 cigarettes daily could lead to a positive change in psoriasis when compared with those that smoked more than 10.<sup>3</sup>

1. AbbVie Data on File 171427; 2. Richer V, et al. J Cut Med Surg 2016;20(3):221–227; 3. Kinahan CE, et al. Br J Dermatol 2015;172(2):428–36.





Small Step 8:

**Looking at ways to reduce stress at work may help you to better manage your psoriasis<sup>1</sup>**



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Whilst not everyone can avoid stress at work, ten per cent of people responding to the survey found that a change in working hours, including stopping shift work, had helped their psoriasis.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is the scientific evidence behind this Small Step?**

Emotional or physical stress can increase the likelihood of worsening psoriasis.<sup>2-4</sup> Reducing stress at work may be one of the ways you can make a small positive change. This could be achieved by changing your working hours, switching to a less stressful role or, like one of our respondents, stopping night work. Night shift work has been associated with worsening psoriasis.<sup>5</sup>

1. AbbVie Data on File 171427; 2. Sarkar R, et al. Indian Dermatol Online J 2016;7:481–488; 3. Heller MM, et al. Skin Therapy Letter 2011;16(5):1-4; 4. Pariser D, et al. J Dermatolog Treat 2016;27(1):19–26; 5. Wenqing L, et al. Invest Dermatol 2013;133(2):565–567.

**See Psoriasis: Look Deeper** is a collaboration made up of The Psoriasis Association; Mental Health Foundation; Dr Sandy McBride, Consultant Dermatologist, Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust; Professor Chris Bundy, Professor of Behavioural Medicine, Cardiff University and Toby Hadoke, actor, writer, comedian and psoriasis patient.

The aim of the collaboration is to look beyond the physical aspects of psoriasis and recognise the wider life impact associated with the condition, including emotional wellbeing and quality of life.

The collaboration's ongoing work continues to raise awareness of the full impact of psoriasis and provide helpful resources for both patients and healthcare professionals.



For more information, please visit  
[www.seepsoriasislookdeeper.co.uk](http://www.seepsoriasislookdeeper.co.uk)