

Psolntimate 2021

Psoriasis and Intimacy Tips

Dating while living with psoriasis

• If your psoriasis is **visible**, it may not be as important to divulge your diagnosis. If it is in more intimate places, such as your genitals, it may be more important to bring it up before becoming intimate. You can start the conversation by bringing attention to what is already visible: "See the patches on my arms? I have them in other places as well."



• Let your partner – or potential partner – know that psoriasis is **not contagious**. Psoriasis is fairly common. Up to 3% of people in Canada live with the disease. You may want to invite questions from your partner in order to open up the conversation and let them know that psoriasis is an inflammatory disease that can flare and what they can expect to change for you if it does.

Psoriasis can affect your sex life

- Sexual activity is an important part of human interaction. Caring for your psoriasis and seeking treatment to allow for a **healthy sex life** is important.
- **Friction** causes irritation and can worsen your psoriasis. It is important to use lubricant to reduce friction.
- **Unscented** products (lubricants, massage oils, etc.) are best as the chemicals used to create scents may irritate your psoriasis.
- If your psoriasis is **inflamed**, cracked or bleeding, or infected, you may need to go slow until your psoriasis improves.
- Discuss any **sexual dysfunction or other impacts** of your psoriasis on your intimate life with your dermatologist. As medical professionals, they are experts in this area and can provide you with guidance for your specific circumstances.

Caring for your skin

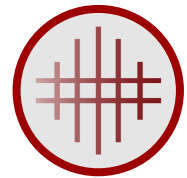
- Avoid **injury** to the skin with sexual play that may be too rough for your skin. As psoriasis can worsen and improve, what is safe for your skin may change, too.
- Wearing **underwear** can go a long way to reducing chaffing and rubbing that makes psoriasis worse. Cheap underwear may also make you uncomfortable – consider investing in underwear that is soft and comfortable.

Psoriasis can cause fatigue

- While not widely known, psoriasis can make people feel tired, which can in turn impact people's intimate lives. We are starting to learn more about the impacts of fatigue and its **connection** with intimacy.
- If your partner lives with psoriasis, their disease may make them feel tired: **it's not you**, it's their psoriasis.

Caring for genital psoriasis

- Many people with psoriasis do not realize that a **rash on their genitals** is also psoriasis.
- A clear **diagnosis** is an important start to managing genital psoriasis and reducing its interference with your intimate life. There are many treatment options and lifestyle modifications that can help.
- To manage the **itch** created by genital psoriasis, a safe and effective treatment for this part of the body is essential.
- **Phototherapy** is contraindicated for genital psoriasis.
- There are many **topical treatments** that are safe and effective for genital psoriasis. Genital skin is thinner than skin on other parts of the body so potent topical corticosteroids that are used in some places on your body (for example, elbows, feet, etc.) can make genital skin thinner. Your dermatologist can help find a lower potency topical steroid (or other treatment) that works for you.
- **Systemic therapy** can be used as well for genital psoriasis. If topical therapies are not effective for you, ask your doctor about systemic therapies.
- Some **insurance plans** require that a person have psoriasis on 10% or more of their body in order to cover a systemic or biologic treatment. However, psoriasis on a person's genitals is an important consideration for insurance plans and they may make an exception if this is the case for you.



Maintaining intimacy and connection during a flare

- When psoriasis makes **touch** uncomfortable, it's important to communicate this to your partner.
- For many people, psoriasis worsens and improves in a cyclical pattern – for example, some people find it gets worse in the winter and better in the summer. If there are **patterns** in your life that affect your psoriasis, you can learn to anticipate these and communicate to your partner about them.
- Having an understanding of a pattern in your life where your psoriasis worsens (flares) and then improves can help you remember that there is an **end in sight** to this cycle.
- You may have to wait out the **flare** since skin can get worse if you don't wait for the skin to clear before having contact.
- If you have to wait out a flare, there are many **creative** options to maintain intimacy. Remember that our intimate lives are ongoing and not defined by a single event!



Psoriasis can make you feel down sometimes

- Doing something that you **enjoy**, like a favourite hobby, can have a dramatic effect on your mental health, even when things are going poorly. Staying active can help improve your mental health as well.



In February 2021, the Canadian Association of Psoriasis Patients (CAPP) launched PsolIntimate, a campaign to bring questions about psoriasis and intimacy out of the shadows. CAPP appreciates the support from AbbVie Canada, Novartis and Sun Pharma Canada for this campaign.