

## Psoriasis

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calcium ions in and out of skin cells. Calcium in the cells acts as a “second messenger” to affect psoriasis in a beneficial way. When used once or twice daily for a month or more, the psoriasis will often go completely away and even stay away until nature calls it back. At first it can cause some irritations, so a small flare up of symptoms and redness is expected. The cream works best for patients with small numbers of spots, since the cream should be applied individually to each of them. Use of more than 3 ounces of cream per week may cause blood calcium levels to rise and kidney stones to develop.

**Tazarotene:** This retinoid is a derivative of vitamin A. Retinoids change differentiation, which means they change the way the skin makes itself. Instead of arriving at the skin surface in an infantile form (as a consequence of the skin making itself too fast), retinoids make the skin keratinocyte cells mature so they flake off in a more dust-like scale. At the same time, they can snuff out inflammation, so that sometimes the psoriasis goes completely away after three months of once daily treatments. The medication is expensive, and the retinoid creams and gels often irritate the skin while working. This leads many dermatologists to use retinoids in combination with topical steroids, applying one at night and the other in the morning.

**Anthralin:** A derivative of certain tree bark, anthralin is not used much anymore because it stains skin and fabrics a purple color, and because it must be applied

carefully to the plaques without getting medication on normal adjacent skin (it is too irritating there).

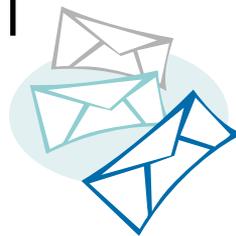
**Salicylic acid:** Most over the counter and TV infomercial products contain this beta hydroxyacid in 2% concentrations. Dermatologists often use higher concentrations to help remove scale and to enhance penetration of other topical products or ultraviolet radiation. The chemical does have some direct anti-inflammatory actions too.

**TIMS (Topical immunomodulators):** These drugs (tacrolimus and pimecrolimus) are not cortisone medications, but like cortisone medications they do suppress inflammation. Unfortunately, their actions are too weak to affect the wildfire of psoriasis, except in body folds and on the face. They may be the treatment of choice there, because they do not seem to cause the skin thinning often seen with cortisone and its glucocorticoid cousins.

In summary, psoriasis is a common skin problem that is not contagious. It is unsightly, and it can make life very miserable. There is no “magic bullet” to put psoriasis to rest. However, persistence, patience, and an understanding dermatologist can usually help make spots go away or at least be more comfortable and less unsightly. ☀

More information about psoriasis can be obtained from

The National Psoriasis Foundation  
at (503)244-7404.



Thanks to the readers on this page for sharing their thoughts and allowing us to share them with you. We encourage readers to contact us with comments and experiences. Letters will be reprinted only with the writer's permission. Thank you for your support.

*During my child's dermatologist visit yesterday, I read a copy of your newsletter. Thank God. Just to know that people are understanding of the thorough misery and feelings of isolation that my family, and especially my child, experience. We are so very burdened emotionally and financially, eczema/psoriasis are truly horrendous diseases. My eighth grader is now on home-bound teaching (again), as he can no longer hold a pencil, and often struggles to walk. We traveled a thousand miles to the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota for help, and he's still suffering. I pray every night for a miracle cure.*

*Thank you, and may God bless each of you.*

Linda

*I have a 7-year-old son that was diagnosed with eczema when he turned 6 months old. At that time I didn't know the meaning of “eczema” thinking it was just a simple rash that would go away. When my son turned 2 1/2 years old I had noticed a rash on different parts of his body recurring often. That is when my nightmare began. I started taking my son to different doctors to get different opinions but unfortunately they were all the same with no hope, knowing there was no cure for this terrible disease. As years went by*

*my son's condition worsened. By the time he was 5 years old his body was covered with eczema, including his scalp. At that time I started searching anything and everything to help him.*

*In December 2000 his condition got out of control and no medication or treatment could calm it down. His doctor advised us to move out of our place because it seemed something there was triggering his condition. After moving out he got so sick he had to be hospitalized for 7 days. I was expecting another child so it made it even harder with all the stress I was going through. I went searching for doctors all over, including homeopathic, health nutritionist, and other home treatment products. Nothing would relieve my son from all that pain, suffering, and emotional distress. It has been real frustrating and difficult to manage but we have no choice but to live with it. Now my son is diagnosed with asthma, food allergies, and seasonal allergies so he get no break all year long. It makes my life so hard that sometimes I cry and ask God to help me stay strong for me to be able to keep helping my son. I give a lot of credit to all parents that have kids with the same condition as mine.*

*I also have a 1 1/2 year old and he also has eczema but I hope and pray to God that his won't be as bad.*

Brenda Chavarri

*I found your newsletter at my Dermatologist's office and found it very interesting. Especially the Pen Pal section! It would be nice to correspond with someone, especially with Pyoderma Gangrenosum. Anyone that would like to e-mail can reach me at biffdunc@aol.com*

*Thanks so much!*  
T.B.D.



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## ECZEMA

### TOUGH WORD TOUGH DISEASE

is now available as an informative video on eczema.

For more information contact:  
**Inflammatory Skin Disease Institute**  
(757) 223-0795 or  
ExDirISDI@aol.com

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