



### Treatment for psoriasis is still sought

Often called an incurable condition, psoriasis has baffled many experts in as they attempt to find a cure or even a good treatment. This immune-system disease appears to be triggered by emotional or physical stress in people who have a genetic predisposition.

Psoriasis comes in several forms. Eighty percent of sufferers have plaque psoriasis -- patches of raised red skin with a white flaky accumulation of dry skin on top. The patches can itch and burn. Knees, elbows, scalp, hands, feet and lower back are most commonly affected.

**Question:** How is psoriasis treated?

**Answer:** Psoriasis is a fickle condition that can start to clear up and be back in full force the next day for no apparent reason. With these natural ups and downs, people can easily draw false conclusions about what they did or did not do to benefit or aggravate the condition.

Relief can come in a variety of ways. Short periods of daily exposure to sunlight can improve the condition, but this can increase the risk of skin cancer.

Moisturizing the skin seems to help, especially with thick and greasy moisturizers that help hold water in the skin longer.

A number of medical creams help some cases: One contains a form of vitamin A, another has vitamin D, others contain cortisone, aspirinlike compounds, etc. The latest drug approved for treatment of severe psoriasis suppresses the immune system, but this increases the risk of developing infections or cancers. No one approach works for everyone.

**Q:** Can nutrition help?

**A:** A number of things have been tried, but nothing seems to be the final answer. Studies have reported improvements with an increase in fish oils in the diet. Researchers in Argentina even went so far as to have patients apply fish oil to

their skin. Despite the unpleasant smell, patients experienced improvement.

**Q:** Does kukui nut oil help psoriasis?

**A:** It is not known if the oil really helps, but some people claim that it helps reduce their symptoms.

About 30 percent of kukui oil consists of an omega-3 fatty acid called linolenic acid. Although this is not the same as the omega-3 fatty acids in fish oils, it is possible that it could provide some benefit when applied directly to the skin.

A research project is under way at the University of Hawaii-Manoa comparing kukui oil with a placebo in the treatment of psoriasis. Researchers include Drs. Amy Brown and David Lally at UH and dermatologist Dr. Douglas Johnson and nurse practitioner Nicole Semaskvich at the Queen's Medical Center.

If you are interested in participating, call Dr. Brown at 956-3846 to see if you qualify.

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