

Patient Information

Psoriasis and your heart

Introduction

Recent research suggests that psoriasis is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Cardiovascular disease is a condition which affects the blood vessels or heart. Patients with cardiovascular disease are more at risk of heart attacks and strokes. This leaflet will give you information about how to manage that risk.

Risk factors

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- High Cholesterol
- Smoking
- Low amount of exercise
- An unhealthy diet containing lots of salts/sugars and fats

Each one of the factors listed above will increase your risk of a heart attack or stroke. If you have more than one risk factor your overall risk of heart attack and stroke will increase even more.

Psoriasis and cardiovascular disease

There is evidence that suggests that patients with psoriasis are at increased risk of heart attacks and strokes. This risk is increased if the psoriasis is severe or if it also involves the joints (psoriatic arthritis).

It is not completely understood why this risk occurs in people with psoriasis but it is thought to be due to inflammation.

Inflammation is when your body produces special cells to fight the psoriasis on your skin or in your joints. These cells are transported in your blood.

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How can the cardiovascular risk be reduced?

The first step is to identify any other risk factors that you may have which increase your risk of a heart attack or stroke. This is done in the same way as in patients without psoriasis by an annual check-up for weight, blood pressure, waist size, blood sugar and cholesterol.

The annual check-up can be done at your GP's surgery.

You will be given advice about the measurements and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Managing your cardiovascular risk

1. **Find out** whether or not you are in this high-risk group. High risk patients are those with severe skin psoriasis, or psoriasis that also affects the joints.
2. **Learn** about the size of the risk and what you can do to help reduce it.
3. **Assess** your existing risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. You should make sure that these risks are controlled as carefully as possible.

Maintaining a healthy heart

- **Diabetes** - as many as 1 in every 5 people with diabetes do not know they have it. A simple blood test can confirm the diagnosis. Diabetes can be managed with diet, lifestyle advice and medication.
- **High Blood Pressure** - this can damage your blood vessels and speed up cardiovascular disease. Blood pressure can be reduced by weight loss, exercise, a healthy low salt diet and medication.
- **Blood cholesterol** is a type of fat which is made in the body. High levels of cholesterol increase your risk of heart attacks and stroke. Cholesterol levels can be measured using a blood test. A healthier diet, regular exercise and taking medicines called statins can help to lower cholesterol levels.

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If you have psoriasis, your dermatologist will work with your GP to help you to reduce your chances of having a heart attack or stroke.

Further information

British Heart Foundation

For more information about heart health, tips and support, please visit:

Website: www.bhf.org.uk

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Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

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* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85

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<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>