



# An Overabundance of Skin Cells

**Psoriasis**-- This skin condition is characterized by red, flaky and silvery patches and can greatly impair the quality of life. Fortunately, there is now a wide range of therapies that make the patients' symptoms easier to manage.

TEXT: JANE FUNKE AND HANNELORE GIESSEN

**P**soriasis affects around two percent of the general population and most often starts in young adults. The symptoms may vary between minor irritation and wide-spread patches covered with silvery *scales*. Furthermore, the skin disease is often visible to others and may consequently cause considerable social stress for those affected by it.

Psoriasis is a systemic disease that cannot be cured but most often treated successfully. A genetic predisposition has been shown however it is not clear why some people with the disposition get ill and others do not.

## Causes and Symptoms

Psoriasis is caused by an increased and *accelerated* production of skin cells. While skin cells are normally replaced within three to four weeks, in psoriasis this process is shortened to three to seven days. This leads to an *overabundance* of cells resulting in the characteristic patches. The pathological process has not yet

been completely understood but it is definitely related to a disturbance of the immune system.

There are several forms of psoriasis depending on where the patches are located and which symptoms occur. About 20 to 30 percent of the patients also have psoriatic arthritis and in 70 to 80 percent of the cases there are symptoms affecting the finger and toe nails.

## General Treatment

In most cases, the first treatment used will be topical treatment, such as vitamin D3 analogues or topical corticosteroids. Moreover, phototherapy may be used, in other words: exposing the skin to certain types of ultraviolet light. In severe cases, where the above forms of treatment are *insufficient*, systemic treatment may be administered. This consists of oral or injected medicines that work throughout the whole body. It is often necessary to apply a combination of different types of treatment.

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## Topical Treatment

Steroids for external use are commonly used to treat mild to moderate psoriasis in most areas of the body. The treatment works by reducing inflammation. It slows the production of skin cells and minimizes **itching**. Topical corticosteroids range in **strength** from mild to very strong in the classes I to IV. They are applied once or twice a day during the first three weeks, then their use is gradually reduced. Another important group of substances are the vitamin D3derivates. The substance most often used is calcipotriol. The accelerated growth of the skin cells

## Vocabulary

English	Deutsch
scale	Schuppe
to accelerate	beschleunigen
overabundance	Überfluss
insufficient	ungenügend
itching	juckend
strength	Stärke
to interfere with	hier: etwas störend beeinflussen
thereby	dadurch
long-lasting	langanhaltend
ointment	Salbe
scalp	Kopfhaut
to pass on	übertragen
contagious	ansteckend
hereditary	erblich
to dot	tupfen
downward	abwärts gerichtet
to pick	hier: (ab)zupfen
to scratch	kratzen
flare-up	hier: Ausbruch
appropriate	geeignet

# Natürliche Hilfe bei Verdauungsproblemen



## Naturreiner Heilpflanzensaft Artischocke

- Bei leichten Verdauungsbeschwerden
- Verbessert die Fettverdauung

**Schoenenberger**

Die Pflanzen. Die Heilkraft. Der Saft. Sonst nichts.



**Naturreiner Heilpflanzensaft Artischocke** - Wirkstoff: Artischockenblütenknospen-Presssaft - **Zus.**: 100 ml enthalten: Wirkstoff: 100 ml Presssaft aus frischen Artischockenblütenknospen (Cynara scolymus L.) (1: 0,60 – 0,90) (hydrolysiert). **Anw.**: Traditionelles pflanzliches Arzneimittel zur Anwendung bei leichten Verdauungsbeschwerden ausschließlich aufgrund langjähriger Anwendung. **Gegenanz.**: Allergie gegen Artischocken und andere Korbblütler (z.B. Kamille oder Arnika). Verschluss der Gallenwege und Gallensteinleiden. **Nebenw.**: Es wurde über leichte Durchfälle mit typischer Begleitsymptomatik (z.B. Bauchkrämpfe) sowie über Überempfindlichkeitsreaktionen, wie z. B. Hautausschläge, berichtet. Über die Häufigkeit liegen keine Angaben vor. Walther Schoenenberger Pflanzensaftwerk GmbH & Co. KG · 71106 Magstadt · [www.schoenenberger.com](http://www.schoenenberger.com)

Teil der  
**salus**  
Gruppe



is slowed down and photosensitivity increased, which leads to an improvement in phototherapy.

The third group of substances used in topical treatment are the calcineurin inhibitors, such as tacrolimus and pimecrolimus. These *interfere with* the immune system by slowing down its activity *thereby* reducing inflammation. These medications can cause skin irritation or a burning and itching sensation when they're restarted, but it usually improves within a week. This information is often helpful for the patients.

### The Base: Consistent Skin Care

Most important for a *long-lasting* improvement of the skin condition is thorough and adequate skin care using suitable formulas. Besides the basic foundation these products often contain urea and salicylic acid. The pharmaceutical team can support patients by recommending appropriate creams, *ointments* or lotions depending on the individual stage of disease and the time of the year. ★

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## Dialogue

**Customer:** Good afternoon, I'd like some cream for my elbow. It's dry, itchy and scaly. My scalp is itchy too. I have often had dry itchy skin but having recently read an article about it, I am now a bit worried that it could be psoriasis. What do you think?

PTA: Would you mind showing me?

**Customer:** Not at all.

PTA: Yes, the scale is silvery. You could be right. How long has it been like this?

**Customer:** A few weeks. Do you think someone has passed it on?

PTA: Psoriasis is not **contagious** but it does need treatment. Is there any history of skin problems in your family?

**Customer:** I know that my grandfather wouldn't wear short trousers because of a skin condition. Is it hereditary?

PTA: Research is ongoing but as yet little is known about the genetics of psoriasis. It is thought to be a multi-system disease as many patients show signs of other disorders at the same time. You should definitely arrange an appointment with a dermatologist. Do you smoke or drink?

**Customer:** I don't smoke but I do like a glass of wine in the evening.

PTA: A healthy lifestyle is always advisable. Fresh fruit and vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids may be beneficial. Alcohol and any kind of junk food are likely to trigger an attack of psoriasis.

**Customer:** So, what should I do?

PTA: The first thing to try is an emollient.

**Customer:** What's that?

PTA: It's a moisturiser with a soothing effect on the skin. It will coat it with a protective film to prevent dehydration and itching and scaling should be reduced. You **dot** it onto the skin and then apply it with long **downward** strokes. This is basic procedure and is helpful in any case. Furthermore, it's important to resist **picking** and **scratching**.

**Customer:** Okay, what will the doctor do?

PTA: Generally, psoriasis is not difficult to diagnose. A skin sample may be taken but only if the case is unclear. Other symptoms you may have, will be discussed and it's also important to check for psoriatic arthritis which affects the joints and can be very painful. Good disease control can also prevent future **flare-ups**.

**Customer:** What about my scalp?

PTA: Descaling may be necessary in order for topical treatment to work. You could try warm oil and preparations containing salicylic acid may be helpful. I would recommend that you use this until your doctor has reached a diagnosis.

**Customer:** That's been very helpful. Could you show me an appropriate cream and a shampoo, please?

PTA: Certainly.

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