Caregivers can play an important role as a member of the psoriasis care team, helping support the well-being of people living with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis. Caregivers may include a spouse, parent, friend, neighbor, and others.

This brochure provides caregivers with tips to help a loved one manage this disease.
HOW YOU CAN HELP

ABOUT PSORIASIS AND PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS

Psoriasis is a common skin condition. It causes itchy, dry, red patches that can be painful, but it is not contagious. Psoriasis is a chronic (long-lasting) disease, but management can make symptoms better.

Some people with psoriasis also get psoriatic arthritis. This causes joint pain, stiffness, and swelling. It can affect any part of the body. There is no cure, but management may make symptoms feel better and stop joint damage.

Encourage your loved one to adopt healthy lifestyle changes

• Increase healthy eating (more fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains)

• Increase exercise and physical activity
  – Join him or her in a new exercise activity or sport. Be sure to check with the doctor before beginning a new exercise program.
  – Exercise can improve overall physical and mental health. It can also lower risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome (a combination of high blood pressure, high insulin levels, and abnormal cholesterol levels), and some cancers.

• Maintain a healthy weight
  – People who are overweight or obese have a higher risk of developing psoriasis. Also, people with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis are more likely to gain weight or be obese.
  – Encourage your loved one to talk to his/her doctor about seeing a nutritionist or joining a weight management program, if appropriate.

• Stop smoking
  – Smoking may make symptoms of psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis worse.
  – Look for appropriate resources to help your loved one quit smoking. And, if you smoke, consider joining in efforts to stop.

• Limit alcohol use
  – It may make your symptoms worse.
  – Encourage your loved one to talk to a doctor about drinking and its effect on psoriasis.
  – Encourage him/her to join an alcohol treatment program such as Alcoholics Anonymous (http://www.aa.org), if appropriate.
Help your loved one perform everyday tasks that might be challenging

- **Help out with shopping**, cooking, cleaning, or anything that your loved one finds difficult.
- **Offer to help apply topical medications** on difficult-to-reach areas. Offer to help with injection of some medications (but consult with health care team first).
- **Find ways to reduce stress**, relax, and rest. Look for relaxing activities that you can do together.

Support your loved one’s mental health

- Coping with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis can be challenging. Patients with these conditions are more likely to become depressed.
- You might notice the symptoms even before your loved one or his/her doctor does. Encourage your loved one to report any symptoms that might be related to depression to the health care team.
- Some symptoms of depression are:
  - Sad, anxious, or “empty” feelings that don’t go away
  - Feelings of hopelessness, guilt, or worthlessness
  - Irritability or restlessness
  - Loss of interest in activities or hobbies
  - Being tired or having less energy
  - Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
  - Sleeping too much or too little
  - Overeating or loss of appetite
  - Thoughts of suicide
  - Aches or pains, headaches, or digestive problems that don’t get better with treatment

Learn as much as you can about psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis and their treatment

- Listen to your loved one. Encourage him/her to share as much or as little as he/she is comfortable sharing.
- **Offer to go with your loved one** to doctors’ appointments or medical tests or procedures.
WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION OR SUPPORT?

There are several websites that provide information and support.

→ National Psoriasis Foundation
  http://www.psoriasis.org
  Get information about psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, learn about research, and find medical professionals. Contact NPF by phone: 800-723-9166.

→ TalkPsoriasis.org
  https://www.inspire.com/groups/talk-psoriasis/
  Join the National Psoriasis Foundation’s online community for people affected by psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis.

→ Mayo Clinic Patient Information
  http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions
  Learn about the disease, management, and lifestyle tips.

→ Psoriatic Arthritis Info
  http://www.psoriaticarthritisinfo.com
  Take a quiz, get a free health organizer, find a doctor, and learn about psoriatic arthritis.

You play an important role in the support and care of your loved one.
Join in healthier lifestyle changes. It’s easier to do it together!