



Beyond
Expectations



Psoriasis at Work

janssen  Immunology

PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES OF *Johnson & Johnson*



What are the challenges?

Managing a career can be hard enough, and managing a career alongside a condition like psoriasis can be particularly challenging. Studies have shown that psoriasis can have a great impact on an individual's work-life and career, such as:

- 49% of people with psoriasis and/or PsA miss work regularly due to illness.¹
- Early retirement²
- Forced career changes²
- Lost productivity at work, which is also directly linked to monetary costs for society³⁻⁵
- Reduced earning potential over a lifetime¹

This guide aims to give practical advice on how to navigate working life when psoriasis is part of the picture. It is for people who may be living with psoriasis themselves, or colleagues and employers of people with psoriasis.



What is psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a chronic, painful, disfiguring and disabling disease that can appear on any part of the body. There are different types of psoriasis.^{6,7} The most common form is plaque psoriasis, which usually leads to patches of thick red, inflamed skin covered with silvery scales known as plaques.⁸

Psoriasis is caused by a problem in the body's immune system, where certain immune cells (T-cells) are triggered and become overactive. These cells start producing inflammatory chemicals that in turn lead to the rapid growth of skin cells, causing plaques to form.⁹ For people with psoriasis some days are better than others. A flare-up of psoriasis can be triggered by many different things, including stress, hormonal changes and injuries to the skin.⁹

Psoriasis is not contagious. It is not something you can 'catch' or that others can catch from you.⁶

Psoriasis does not just affect the skin, it can affect other parts of the body and is closely linked with other conditions such as:⁹⁻¹³

- Psoriatic arthritis, a condition affecting the joints and muscles
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD)
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Cancer
- Osteoporosis
- Metabolic syndrome

Just as importantly, people with psoriasis often struggle with depression and anxiety.¹⁵ You can find out more about the impact of psoriasis in the [Mental Health and Psoriasis guide](#).



Communicating with your employer: How do you tell them about your psoriasis?

If you are new to a role, interviewing for a new job, or if you were only just diagnosed while in your current role, you might be tempted not to mention your psoriasis for fear of stigma or misunderstanding about the condition. This is your decision. However, while you are not legally obliged to inform anyone about your condition, if your day-to-day activities are becoming difficult, it's important to consider being transparent about your condition with key team members, your manager or human resources team.

If you believe your psoriasis may impact on your work or productivity at some point in the future, either due to flare-ups or the need for regular medical appointments, you might find it easier to manage if you know there are key people at work who can help you handle your workload when things get difficult. Remember that you are under no obligation to inform anyone of your condition, and how much you choose to disclose is entirely up to you.

Know your rights!

Remember, you are under no obligation to inform your employer about your psoriasis and your condition should never be responsible for preventing your progression. Most European nations have anti-discrimination legislation to protect those with conditions like psoriasis – so make sure you are aware of your rights.

Remember, it is your right to be as open or private as you wish.



Tips on how to discuss your psoriasis with your manager, co-workers or human resources team

...if your psoriasis is currently under control at work

- Explain your condition in simple terms
- Explain the techniques you use to ensure the condition is well managed
- Explain the triggers that might cause a flare-up and discuss how to avoid them
- Try to keep the information you share about your condition relevant to your workplace
- Talk about the possible impact your psoriasis might have on your work in the future (include potential side effects from the treatment that you are currently taking)
- Ask about flexible working options that might be helpful
- Ask what options/support can the business provide to help assist you (such as somewhere to go to apply topical creams)





...if your psoriasis is currently not under control at work

- Explain your condition in simple terms
- Explain the challenges you are currently experiencing due to your psoriasis
- Talk about the possible impact your psoriasis might have/is having on your work
- Try to keep the information you share about your condition relevant to your workplace
- If you are experiencing side effects from your treatment that are impacting your work, discuss them with the relevant member(s) of your team
- Ask about flexible working options that might be helpful
- Ask what options/support can the employer provide to help assist you
- Reassure them that you are willing to be flexible to ensure your job continues to be done to a high standard
- Remind them that psoriasis can be well controlled and that you will work with your doctor to find a treatment that works well, so it should not affect your work in future
- Ask them for patience and understanding – remember, you may have psoriasis but that should not stop you from being a productive and valuable member of your team



How to manage your psoriasis at work

It's not always easy, but with planning and the right support, you can make real strides in improving your work-life balance. These tips might be helpful, whether you work in an office, from home, in retail or your work requires a manual skill-set:

1 Get enough rest

During busy periods, make sure you get your rest. A lack of sleep is proven to cause more flare-ups.¹⁶

2 Use your support network

A long week at work paired with a flare-up can be very tiresome. Be sure to use your family and friends for support when you need it.

3 Know your signs

If you anticipate a flare-up in advance, you can plan your week accordingly. Try to identify some of your tell-tale signs of when a flare-up may be about to occur.

4 Avoid trigger foods/ lifestyle triggers

Certain risk factors, such as obesity, a sedentary lifestyle, smoking and alcohol intake, have been linked to an increased risk of developing psoriasis or exacerbating the symptoms and comorbidities associated with the disease.¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Your diet and lifestyle is something you can control, so try to stay healthy!

5 Manage your stress

Managing your mental health alongside psoriasis can be a battle. Be sure to read our [Mental health and psoriasis guide](#) for more advice.

6 Check-in regularly with your manager or human resources team

If you do want to share your condition with your employers, it is sensible to schedule regular check-ins to provide updates on how things are going.¹⁹

7 Be flexible with your work schedule

If possible, keep your work schedule flexible. For example, if you have some heavy lifting to do but are in the middle of a bad flare-up, try to shift that task until later in the week when your condition may have improved. Similarly, if you feel too uncomfortable to go into the office, make plans to dial into meetings from home.¹⁹

8 Stay positive

It is natural to feel down and exhausted after a particularly bad period with your psoriasis, but it is essential to stay positive. Over time, you will find methods that work for you and things will improve.

Remember, while you need to take your health seriously and find ways to manage your condition and work more comfortably, it does not have to stop you from being a productive employee. It's your overall performance, and how you tackle challenges that matters, not your psoriasis.



I work with/employ someone who has psoriasis. How do I help them?

- Be understanding. People who have psoriasis may be affected in different ways. Some people may not have any difficulty, while others may have special needs or require time off work for medical appointments
- Educate yourself
- Explore all possible work options/solutions to the challenges they are having
- Respect the individual's request for privacy
- Offer to support and help in any way you can
- Understand that they might try to over-compensate by working long hours
- Keep communications transparent
- Be aware that poor mental health is commonly associated with psoriasis. If you believe your colleague is unwell, try to encourage them to seek assistance from their healthcare professional, and raise your concerns with their manager or member(s) of the human resources team

Thank you for reading. If you have psoriasis or you work with someone who does, keep in mind that if health isn't prioritised, it can cause the condition to get worse, resulting in greater challenges down the line.

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If you're looking for more info or a local patient group to connect to please visit: euro-psyo.org.



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