



spotlight on health

Experts Help Those Living With Serious Skin Disease Live Life to the Fullest

(NAPSA)—Everyone wants to feel good about themselves and have the confidence they need to realize their ambitions. But for some people, living with a very visible skin condition like psoriasis may impact their self-esteem, which, in turn, can affect their ability to reach their goals.

Up to 7.5 million people in the United States are living with the chronic skin disease called psoriasis. But what many people don't know is that psoriasis is not just a rash or itchy, dry skin—it's an autoimmune disease, meaning your immune system actually attacks your own body. Skin cells reproduce at an accelerated rate, rising to the skin surface, dying and building up there. The result can be painful and itchy red, scaly patches that develop on areas of the body such as the elbows, knees and scalp.

Psoriasis may affect people both physically and emotionally. People with this condition may feel helpless, embarrassed, angry and/or frustrated. And, often-times, they don't reveal how their psoriasis is affecting their daily lives. For example, those living with psoriasis may wear long sleeves and pants to cover their arms and legs, or stop socializing with friends or going to the gym because they're embarrassed by the appearance of their skin.

"As a dermatologist, it's very



important for me to know exactly how the condition may be changing the way my patients live, so that together we can determine the best treatment option," said Mark Lebwohl, M.D., chairman of the National Psoriasis Foundation Medical Board. "Newer medicines called biologics target the specific cells or chemical messengers of the immune system involved in moderate to severe plaque psoriasis. These medicines can improve patients' physical symptoms. With their symptoms under control, patients may feel more comfortable returning to their normal social activities," said Dr. Lebwohl.

This potentially debilitating skin condition can have a profoundly negative impact on a person's lifestyle. However, there are tips that psoriasis patients can use, in addition to proper treatment, to enhance their confidence and re-engage in the activities that they enjoy.

"As a life coach, I want people

Laura Berman Fortgang's Tips for Living Life to the Fullest:

- Remind yourself daily of your positive contributions (at work, with family, in the community).
- Separate who you are from your ailment (you are more than that!).
- Reduce stress with meditation, yoga, breathing exercises or physical activity.
- Seek out people with similar experiences who are positive and taking action.
- Instead of avoiding people, educate those around you.

living with psoriasis to know that their condition can be manageable and it is possible to maintain a healthy attitude and outlook living with this condition," said Laura Berman Fortgang. "For example, set up daily reminders of all your positive contributions at work, with your family and in your community; reduce stress with meditation or yoga; and instead of avoiding interaction with others, educate those around you to help lessen the stigma associated with psoriasis."

For more information about psoriasis, including additional tips from Laura Berman Fortgang about how people living with psoriasis can gain more confidence and live life to the fullest, visit www.psoriasisconnect.com.