

Can autoimmune diseases (like psoriasis) be treated without drugs?

POSTED ON APRIL 27, 2012 BY JOEL FUHRMAN, M.D.

Autoimmune diseases affect 23.5 million Americans, and that number is rising. **Autoimmune diseases are one of the top ten leading causes of death for women under the age of 64.**¹ In **autoimmune diseases**, the body undergoes an inappropriate **immune** response that causes excessive inflammation that becomes destructive to the body. One autoimmune disease in particular, psoriasis, received attention recently after reality TV star Kim Kardashian was **diagnosed** with the condition.

Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory skin condition – the most prevalent autoimmune disease in the U.S. affecting about 7.5 million Americans; and it is much more than a cosmetic concern.²

Depending on the severity of psoriasis, it can also cause skin cracking and bleeding, pain, and a significant disruption of quality of life. In addition, **psoriasis is associated with increased cardiovascular risk.**³⁻⁵ Even mild psoriasis may increase the risk of heart attack by up to 29%.⁶

The chronic inflammation characteristic of psoriasis (and other autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus) puts patients at risk.^{7,8} In addition to **cardiovascular disease**, psoriasis patients are also more likely to suffer from **insulin resistance, depression, cancer, osteoporosis**, and liver disease – also likely due to chronic inflammation.⁹⁻¹¹

Nutritional intervention should always be tried first, before powerful and potentially dangerous drugs are prescribed.

Conventional treatments for autoimmune diseases suppress the immune system to halt the body's immune attack on itself. However, this makes the body more susceptible to infections and even cancers – one study found that autoimmune patients with the greatest exposure to immunosuppressive drugs had an almost 5-fold increase in cancer risk.¹² The FDA has issued warnings on certain **drugs** used to treat autoimmune diseases because of increased cancer risk.¹³ Mild to moderate psoriasis can often be treated with topical medications only – these are safer than systemic medications, but still have significant side effects such as skin thinning, pigmentation changes, bruising easily, stretch marks, redness, and acne. They also may stop working over time.¹⁴

Nutrition is a powerful and safe tool for preventing and treating autoimmune diseases.¹⁵⁻²⁰

Although psoriasis has a genetic component (about one-third of patients have a family history²), it is also influenced by what we eat. Those with a high intake of green vegetables, carrots, tomatoes, and fresh fruits are less likely to develop psoriasis. Oxidative stress, which can be lessened by these antioxidant-rich foods, is thought to contribute to skin inflammation in psoriasis. Furthermore, psoriasis symptoms have been shown to improve using dietary methods in several scientific studies.²¹

I have been recommending a high-nutrient (nutritarian) diet combined with selected supplements and when needed, and episodic fasting to help the body to calm inflammation and remove cellular toxins. **High nutrient plant foods** supply substances that support immune system function, allowing the body to have proper defenses against infections and cancers. Supervised water fasting is another important component to autoimmune treatment – I have documented the contribution of fasting to remission of autoimmune disease in published case reports.²² Keep in mind also, that the conditions that psoriasis sufferers are vulnerable to – heart disease in particular – are also those that can be prevented with healthy lifestyle habits. **The only side effects of nutritional treatment are positive ones – protective effects against heart disease, diabetes, and cancers. This healthy protocol promotes longevity as it normalizes immune function.**

Dietary Intervention for Autoimmune Diseases

Natural methods can help you calm the inflammation in your body and reduce or even eliminate your need for medications. **I urge everyone with an autoimmune disease (Kim Kardashian included!) to try these natural methods before resigning themselves to a life of dangerous medications and progressively worsening disease:**

1. High-nutrient, vegetable-based diet rich in greens
2. Fresh vegetable juices
3. Fish oil or plant-based EPA and DHA supplements
4. Probiotic supplement
5. Avoidance of salt, wheat, and oils
6. Assuring no micronutrient deficiencies are present.

Using these methods, **many of my patients** who once suffered from autoimmune diseases have now recovered and are free of illness as well as toxic side effects of the drugs. Some of these recoveries have written me, but I have never met them. All they did was read one of my books and follow the **protocols** detailed online.

Jodi, who has recovered from psoriasis, and psoriatic arthritis is an excellent example:

“I started experiencing skin rashes and joint pain as a teenager more than 40 years ago. Back then, in the 60’s, I don’t think doctors knew much about autoimmune conditions (perhaps not even now). I was put on various drugs, including steroids, plaquenil, methotrexate and antihistamines, which swelled my body up like a beached whale. I was on medication for almost 20 years and saw different medical specialists including allergists, dermatologists, hematologists, rheumatologists, and endocrinologists.

By the time I turned 50 in 1999, I was covered from head to toe with psoriasis and tested positive for other autoimmune diseases: rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, Hashimoto’s and Sjogren’s. The medications only helped a little and I suffered with joint pain, unable to function normally for over twenty years in spite of taking all the medications prescribed by rheumatologists.

In my quest for improved health, I read Dr. Fuhrman's **books** and I have followed his eating plan since 2001 with much success. I take no medications, and have no symptoms of psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis.

The body has incredible healing powers if given the proper nutrients and care. I have also lost 20 pounds and breezed through menopause. I consider myself 58 years young.”

Karen’s severe psoriasis improved after only 3 days:

“In January 2006, I developed psoriasis on my hands... My hands continued to deteriorate. They were very scaly and would split open. In early 2007, the cuts on my hands became infected several times, and my hands were very swollen and painful. I was put on antibiotics to treat the infection. During that time, the dermatologist explained I had a severe case of psoriasis and suggested I start taking a chemotherapy drug. I didn’t want to go down that path... A couple of months ago, I heard Dr. Oz interview Dr. Fuhrman on his radio program. I was fascinated when I heard Dr. Fuhrman comment that diet can improve autoimmune diseases. I picked up Eat To Live and read it cover to cover. I wanted to try the diet, but I was afraid that I would not stick with the plan long enough to see results. Finally, I decided to give it a shot. I switched to Fuhrman’s nutritional diet and within two days, my hands looked incredible! By the third day, I was off the medication!!”

Gary now has no psoriatic arthritis pain, and reduced his medication:

“In May, you kindly responded to my e-mail asking whether your nutritional treatment for psoriatic arthritis is the same as for psoriasis. I bought your book... and feel like I hit the jackpot. Here's the good news. After 11 weeks on Eat to Live... I have no arthritis pain, reduced the methotrexate from 5 pills per week to 3, lost over 50 pounds, and for six weeks now, quit using tar shampoo for psoriasis (first time since age 13 or 14). Awesome! Thanks so unbelievably much.” I plan on stopping the methotrexate next month completely.

