

How to Bring Comfortable (and Enjoyable!) Sex into Your Life

Adaptive sex positions & tips for people who have psoriatic disease

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Managing stress is an important part of managing symptoms of psoriatic disease. Sex should be an opportunity to feel relief and pleasure — not an additional stressor that could potentially worsen your flares or symptoms. Communication is key to ensuring that you feel confident and empowered in an intimate experience and connected with your partner.

Tips for sensual touching and relaxation

- Identify areas of concern on your skin and avoid touching there
- Communicate with your partner about the amount of pressure and location of touch that makes you feel good and confident
- Be aware of flares in your skin and joints
- Be mindful of any scented products on your skin if you have any sensitivities or allergies and look for options that don't irritate your skin
- Discuss what you're looking for with your partner:
 - Do you want to feel relief in certain areas with a deeper massage? (This can be uncomfortable or painful for some people)
 - Are you looking for a more gentle and sensual experience?
 - Are you looking to incorporate objects or toys?
- Focus on the areas that make you feel good instead of pointing out the areas of concern



If you have a psoriatic flare...



Skin

- Use scents or textures that make you feel good, calm and relaxed - **be mindful of any scented products on your skin if you have sensitive skin.**
- If you're comfortable with it, **encourage your partner to help you apply your lotions, creams, or ointments.**



Joints

- Find positions that give you a sense of comfort and support
- Use pillows to help reduce the pressure on your flare



Focus on taking deep breaths and self-acceptance that the flare will pass.

Communication is key! Speak with your partner about ways that they can help make you feel good like partnered massage, stretches, or activities that promote intimacy like shared interests (TV shows, books, etc.)

Use extra caution to ensure appropriate hydration and avoid known triggers.



For those who are looking for advice on dating with a chronic health condition, the Canadian Skin Patient Alliance (CSPA) has a series of videos that touch on the mental health impact of a chronic condition.


To learn more about dating with a chronic condition, here's a video to begin that journey:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_GHWTFy_Rg

If you have pain in your lower back...

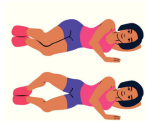
- Talk to your partner about your pain and how they can help to make you feel more comfortable or relaxed
- Perform hip mobility exercises to warm up the hips for movement:
 - Leg swings
 - Clamshells
 - Donkey kicks
 - Cobra, cat/cow
- Your partner can perform hip mobility exercises with you - this can help your partner learn what feels good for you, and it helps you both learn how to communicate your needs
- Use pillows to reduce pressure and to support your back/hips if on your back
 - Under your stomach if you have pain with extension or under your lower back if you have pain with flexion
- Try a different position that doesn't trigger your lower back pain
 - Be mindful of speed and pressure and find a combination that works for you

If you have inflammation in your hands...

- Gentle hand stretches
- Roll your hands out with a ball 
- Have your partner do gentle massage
- Avoid positions that require weight-bearing in your hands
 - Use forearm weight-bearing positions to distribute the weight better
- Talk to your partner about your limitations
- Incorporate a sex toy that relieves stress from your affected areas.
 - For example, some have ergonomic wider grip handles
 - Vibration vs not – choose whichever feels best for you
 - Useful for both self-pleasure and partnered experience
- Focus on what you can do well and own it!



Leg swings



Clamshells



Cow pose



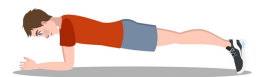
Cat pose



Donkey kicks



Cobra stretch



Use forearm weight-bearing positions

Exercises to help make movement more enjoyable

- It is important to **stay hydrated before and after movement!**
- **Grip strength and hand relaxation**
- **Stress relief** - yoga, going for walks with your partner
- **Hip, ankle and upper back mobility exercises** to improve movement in the joints and reduce pressure
- **Consider low or moderate impact exercises** that are easier on your joints such as swimming, elliptical machines and walking
- **Strengthen your body** to improve your tolerance and endurance to movement and stress (physical and emotional)
- **Start gentle and work your way up** as you can handle
- **Incorporate variations and increase weight slowly** only as movements become easier (and as you get stronger!)
- **Focus on endurance** – try to do 12-15 repetitions of an exercise at an exertion level where you're able to complete all of the repetitions (in the set) but the last 2-3 repetitions are challenging
 - Take sufficient rest between exercises so that you're able to complete all of the repetitions

Core activation exercise:

- Lying on your back with your knees bent and feet on the ground, brace your core by pulling your belly button in towards your spine while keeping your shoulders down away from your ears - most importantly, remember to breathe! Hold the position for 30 seconds.
 - Taking smaller slow breaths that fill the rib cage help you focus on keeping the core engaged.
- You can put a rolled towel under your lower back – or your partner can put their hand there – as a reminder to make sure you're keeping your lower back against the ground while you contract your abs.



At the end of the day, sex is an activity that can help with physical and emotional relief and release. Our main goal is to provide options to be able to get the most out of an activity that is supposed to bring pleasure without letting your condition get in the way of fully enjoying life.

For more tips and ways to manage your specific psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis needs, seek the support of a regulated health care professional like a dermatologist, rheumatologist, registered kinesiologist, physiotherapist, or registered massage therapist for guidance.

Jaime Glassman is a Registered Kinesiologist and owner of The Movement Maven, a kinesiology practice that focuses on making movement fun and accessible for people who have chronic pain. **Sabrina Ribau** is a Registered Kinesiologist and Program Manager of the CSPA.