

prima

Making life simple

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1001 tricks, tips & clever ideas

Mind, body & soul

'I love curries, but they don't love my skin'



When I went to the specialist, his face blanched and he called in his colleagues – it was the worst case he'd seen

Alison Besales, 40, from Thames Ditton in Surrey, runs a website with her husband Imed, 41. They have two children, Sumaia, 11, and Ayman, nine

'When people hear the word "psoriasis" they immediately think of the Singing Detective, and, at my worst, I did look like him. Every inch of skin was covered with red weeping scales. The smallest movement was agony and clothes were unbearable. When I went

to the specialist, his face blanched and he called in other colleagues as it was the most severe case he'd seen.

'Normal skin replaces itself every 28 days, but during a bad attack of psoriasis, your skin sheds in 24 hours, so all around you are flakes of dead skin.

'It first began when I was 20 – I was a student and had been travelling. I hadn't been eating properly and had been taking lots of antibiotics and had several vaccinations, which, combined, triggered the condition. I felt absolutely desperate, as well as being in agony. I hated the way people stared at me. I'd cover up as much as possible, but my face was still on display.

'Since psoriasis is incurable, it's a matter of trying to keep the attacks to a minimum. I tried all sorts of steroid creams, conventional medicinal treatments and

complementary remedies. Then I discovered the attacks were linked to hormones and diet – and the list of trigger foods was enormous. For normal skin, I'd have to avoid wheat, dairy, alcohol, yeast and spicy food. I can't do without my curries and glasses of red wine, so now I have them occasionally and keep my skin in a tolerable condition. My attitude has changed as I've grown used to having psoriasis – now, even if my legs are patchy, I'll wear what I want. I've never felt embarrassed being naked in front of Imed.

'When my daughter Sumaia was born she developed eczema. Children are so perfect you think there'll never be anything wrong with them. So I felt incredibly responsible as it's linked to psoriasis. But, as with me, her condition is now under control.'

Psoriasis – the facts

- Psoriasis is a non-contagious recurring skin condition that affects two per cent of the UK population. Steroid creams can help, as well as UVB light treatment, which works by slowing down the rate at which the skin renews itself, but this treatment has been linked to skin cancer.
- For advice and allergy treatments, call 0800 052 8228 or visit www.allergymatters.co.uk.
- Contact the Psoriasis Association on 0845 676 0076 or visit www.psoriasis-association.org.uk.

Feature: Emily Partridge. Photos: Bae Wingrave, David Cubbin, Charlotte Murphy

Products for problem skin

For irritated skin:
Oilatium Natural Repair Cream, £7.75 (75ml), from Boots, Sainsbury's and Superdrug. This fragrance-free cream works with the skin's own natural repair process to restore its protective barrier and nourish very dry skin.

For dry skin:
Vertese High Strength Evening Primrose Oil, £5.99 (30 capsules), from Boots, Morrisons and Superdrug. Evening Primrose Oil contains the fatty acid GLA, which is essential for healthy skin. These capsules also contain skin-boosting vitamin E.

For spotty skin:
Dermologica Anti-bac Skin Wash, £18.60 (237ml). For stockists, call 0800 591818. This deep-cleansing wash contains salicylic acid to dissolve dead skin debris and an antibacterial ingredient to prevent outbreaks.

For scarred skin: Weleda Wild Rose Intensive Facial Oil, £9.80. For mail order call 0115 944 8222. Containing Rosa mosqueta (oil pressed from wild musk rose), this oil supports the skin's natural renewal process, to help reduce scarring.

All-rounder: Perfectil supplements, £8.50 (30 tablets), from Boots, Superdrug and Holland & Barrett. Developed by doctors and nutritionists, each tablet contains 24 nutrients to protect against the ageing of skin tissues, along with herbs to assist wound healing.

* Next month: Could your lack of energy be more than just tiredness?