Diet and exercise programs leading to weight loss may improve psoriasis severity.

A summary report of five such programs in overweight psoriasis patients found that patients who lost weight on the programs experienced an overall improvement in psoriasis severity scores.

TRIGGERS In terms of triggers, the biggest lifestyle triggers are smoking and increased alcohol intake.

Gluten-containing foods may act as a trigger in some patients, but it’s not a common trigger. For patients with GI symptoms (such as constipation/diarrhea/abdominal pain/other symptoms), we recommend testing for celiac antibodies. Several studies have found that patients with psoriasis are at about double the risk for developing celiac disease. That’s still not a high number, though, since celiac disease is so uncommon in most populations. Other patients with psoriasis don’t have celiac disease, but do have certain gluten antibodies. Some of these patients have noticed improvement by avoiding gluten. Blood tests can identify these antibodies.

HELPERS The research suggests that for overweight psoriasis patients, diet and exercise programs leading to weight loss may help. However, we still need more research into whether a particular type of diet may help. In terms of supplements, we need more research, especially into fish oil and vitamin D. Curcumin, the active ingredient in the spice turmeric, also warrants more research.