

PSORIASIS

WHAT IT IS

Psoriasis is a common chronic inflammatory skin condition usually characterized by red to violet elevated patches (plaques) depending on the patients underlying skin pigmentation, with overlying flaking silvery scales. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.

RISK FACTORS

Psoriasis can develop at any age, although it is typically seen in adults. Plaque psoriasis is the most common form, but one form of psoriasis called guttate psoriasis tends to occur more commonly in childhood and early adulthood. Psoriasis occurs equally across genders.

Psoriasis has a genetic basis and about 1/3 of people with psoriasis have at least one family member with the disease. While the exact cause of psoriasis has not yet been determined, researchers believe it involves a combination of genetic, environmental and immune factors.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Signs and symptoms can include:

- Red to violet elevated areas of skin (plaques), usually covered with silvery-white scales
- Scaly plaques on the scalp, or shiny patches on the genitals or in the skin folds
- Itching and skin pain, sometimes severe
- Joint pain, swelling or stiffness in 1/3 of psoriasis patients who have psoriatic arthritis
- Nail abnormalities including nail pits, lifting of the nail, or thickening of the nail

While lesions can appear anywhere on the body, the most common sites include elbows, knees, scalp, chest and lower back.



IMPACT

Psoriasis has a broad impact on patients that extends beyond the cosmetic or physical aspects. It can negatively affect a person's quality of life due to stigmatization, embarrassment, physical pain and discomfort.

Psoriatic lesions can be itchy, painful and bleed, making it difficult to sleep, dress or engage in various daily activities. If there is joint involvement with psoriatic arthritis, the pain can also make it challenging for the individual to function physically and may impair ability to work or perform daily activities.

DIAGNOSING PSORIASIS

Diagnosis of psoriasis involves taking a careful history and conducting a physical examination.

Psoriasis can present in a variety of forms, which include plaque, guttate, pustular, inverse and erythrodermic. Some of these types may evolve from plaque psoriasis.

Plaque psoriasis is the most common form, and it occurs in about 90% of patients. It usually begins with red scaly patches and plaques. The symptoms can range from mild to severe, covering very small or extensive areas of the body.

TRIGGERS

Psoriasis may be permanent or episodic, meaning that it can flare up then subside and disappear altogether for a while before another episode occurs.

Triggers or precipitating factors may cause a flare-up in disease or even lead to the development of psoriasis. These factors include: emotional stress, local injury to skin, systemic infections, weather and the use of certain medications.

TREATMENT

There are several treatments available to help manage psoriasis:

- Topically-applied treatments (lotions, creams and ointments)
- Oral Medications
- Biologics (given by injection or infusion)
- Light Therapy
- Combination Therapy

TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

- 1 Psoriasis is not contagious. It is not an infectious disease.
- 2 There is not yet a permanent cure for psoriasis, but effective treatment can send psoriasis into remission, making symptoms disappear for weeks to months at a time.
- 3 If you have a family history of psoriasis, you can help to prevent or minimize the chances of developing it by reducing stress, avoiding smoking, alcohol, obesity or being over-weight and discussing with your medications with your physician.



Additional information on Psoriasis is available online.

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