



PSORIASIS MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

At one time, people thought that the Earth was flat.

Just as hundreds of years of sailing around the world have taught us the Earth is round, the medical community has taught us that psoriasis can't be caught or spread.

However, many people still believe that psoriasis is contagious. The National Psoriasis Foundation helps separate fact from fiction about the disease.

Psoriasis is a noncontagious, lifelong disease which generally appears as patches of raised, red skin covered by flaky, white buildup of dead skin cells, called scale. These scale patches or "lesions" most commonly appear on the scalp, knees, elbows and torso. The lesions are often itchy and can be painful.

"The expression 'to be comfortable in your own skin' takes on new meaning when you have psoriasis."

1 Psoriasis is not contagious

No one can "catch" psoriasis from another person. Because of their genes, some people are more likely to develop it, but a "trigger" is usually necessary to make psoriasis appear. These triggers may include emotional stress, injury to the skin, some types of infection and reaction to certain drugs.

2 Psoriasis is not a matter of poor hygiene

Cleanliness has nothing to do with the likelihood of developing psoriasis. Psoriasis symptoms are visible on the skin, but the disease starts below the skin's surface. The immune

"What bothers me the most is when people on the street look down at it, then quickly turn their heads as if they didn't see a thing."

system sends faulty signals that speed up the skin's growth cycle to only three to four days as opposed to the 28-day normal cycle for skin growth.

3 Psoriasis is not a cosmetic problem

People with psoriasis experience physical pain as well as frustration, self-consciousness and embarrassment because

"I believe that my chronic pain and chronic itching affect not only me but my husband, too."

of their disease. Researchers have found that psoriasis causes as much disability as other major diseases, including cancer, arthritis, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and depression.

Also, about 10 percent to 30 percent of people with psoriasis will develop psoriatic arthritis, a form of arthritis associated with psoriasis. Psoriatic arthritis causes pain, stiffness and swelling in and around the joints.

4 Psoriasis isn't temporary

Psoriasis is lifelong, usually with alternating periods of flare-ups and clearing. It most often appears between the ages of 15 and 25.

5 Psoriasis is treatable

With new options and improved existing treatments, people have a wide variety of ways to help manage the symptoms of psoriasis. Doctors called dermatologists are trained to

"I have felt alone in this battle; you can't imagine what it is like to find people living with the same problems as me."

diagnose skin diseases and can discuss appropriate medical approaches. There is no cure yet, but through education and advocacy, there is hope.

www.psoriasis.org

The National Psoriasis Foundation Web site www.psoriasis.org is one of the world's most comprehensive source of information about psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. Along with information about the causes, treatment and impact of psoriasis (reviewed by medical experts), read about the work of the National Psoriasis Foundation and how you can help support our mission of improving the lives of people with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.