



FACTS ABOUT PSORIASIS

What is psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a noncontagious, lifelong skin disease that affects 125 million people worldwide. It generally appears as patches of raised, red skin covered by flaky, white buildup of dead skin cells. These patches, or lesions, most commonly appear on the scalp, knees, elbows and torso, are often itchy and can be painful.

Who gets it?

Psoriasis affects both genders equally. It can strike at any age, although it commonly appears between the ages of 15 and 25. It is not possible to predict who will get psoriasis, although scientists believe heredity and environmental factors play a role. As many as 7.5 million Americans have psoriasis, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Disease severity

Psoriasis can be mild, moderate or severe. One way to measure this severity is by how much of the body's surface area is covered by psoriasis. Most cases of psoriasis are considered mild, affecting a small percentage of the body. However, psoriasis can also have a serious impact even if it involves a small area, such as the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet.

Psoriasis severity is also measured by how the disease affects a person's quality of life. Many people with psoriasis have reported trouble sleeping, difficulty using their hands, and walking, sitting and standing for long periods of time.

About 10 percent to 30 percent of people with psoriasis will develop psoriatic arthritis, an inflammatory disease of the joints and soft tissue around them. People with psoriasis who are experiencing joint pain and/or stiffness should be examined by a rheumatologist to see if they have psoriatic arthritis. Early detection can prevent joint damage and pain.

What causes psoriasis?

Although the exact cause of psoriasis is unknown, most researchers believe it is related to the body's immune system. Psoriasis is also believed to be genetic; however, not everyone can trace their psoriasis to a family history of the disease.

In people with psoriasis, the immune system is mistakenly "triggered," ultimately causing skin cells to pile up on the surface. Triggers may include emotional stress, injury to the skin, smoking, some types of infection and reaction to certain drugs.

Treatments

There is no cure for psoriasis, but many treatments are available to help manage its symptoms.

Psoriasis is treated in a variety of ways, and some people use a combination of treatments. These include topical treatments, phototherapy (exposure to ultraviolet light), and oral and injected medications.

Some people with psoriasis find relief with alternative treatments such as acupuncture, dietary supplements, climatotherapy and meditation.

No single treatment works for everyone. The goal is to work with a doctor to find a treatment that works the best with the fewest side effects, based on the individual's type of psoriasis and medical history.

Research

New treatments for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are in the research and development stages. The National Psoriasis Foundation supports research toward these treatments and advocates for access to treatment on behalf of people with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.



FACTS ABOUT PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS

What is psoriatic arthritis?

Psoriatic arthritis is an inflammatory disease that causes pain, stiffness and swelling in and around the joints. It can also cause fatigue. Psoriatic arthritis most often appears in the fingers and toes, but other parts of the body can be affected, including the wrists, neck, lower back, knees and ankles.

Who gets it?

Approximately 10 percent to 30 percent of people who have psoriasis develop psoriatic arthritis. However, those with psoriatic arthritis do not always have psoriasis. Psoriatic arthritis most often appears about 10 years after psoriasis does, but can develop at any time.

Although psoriatic arthritis usually develops between the ages of 30 and 50, it can affect anyone at any age, including children.

Disease severity

Psoriatic arthritis is a treatable but lifelong, irreversible disease. In addition to joint pain and inflammation, common symptoms include reduced range of motion, morning stiffness and tiredness, nail changes, including pitting or lifting of the nail, and eye pain and redness.

It can also have a major impact on a person's quality of life. Many people with psoriatic arthritis have reported trouble sleeping, using their hands, and walking, sitting and standing for long periods of time.

People with psoriasis who are experiencing persistent joint pain and/or stiffness should be examined by a rheumatologist as soon as possible to see if they have psoriatic arthritis. Early detection can prevent major joint damage and pain.

It's important to share any history of psoriasis with a doctor, as it may be important to receiving a diagnosis. Left untreated, psoriatic arthritis can be disabling and cause irreversible joint damage.

What causes psoriatic arthritis?

The cause of psoriatic arthritis has not yet been determined. Scientists know that genetics and the immune system play important roles in the development of this disease, and that environmental factors may also trigger it.

Treatments

There is no cure for psoriatic arthritis, but there are many treatments that help patients live healthy, productive lives. These treatments range from simple warm water soaks, exercise programs and physical therapy to over-the-counter and prescription drugs to relieve pain and stiffness. Some new biologic drugs are believed to help stop the progression of joint and tissue damage.

Research

New treatments for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are in the research and development stages. The National Psoriasis Foundation supports research toward these treatments and advocates for access to treatment on behalf of people with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis.



**NATIONAL
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FACTS ABOUT THE NATIONAL PSORIASIS FOUNDATION

Who we are

The National Psoriasis Foundation is a patient-driven, nonprofit patient advocacy organization and the voice for millions of Americans and their families who are affected by psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. Since 1968, the Psoriasis Foundation has made a significant difference in the way psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are treated and perceived.

Foundation staff, members and volunteers work closely with our volunteer Board of Trustees and Medical Board to carry out our mission of improving the quality of life of people who have psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. Through education and advocacy, we promote awareness and understanding, ensure access to treatment and support research that will lead to effective management and, ultimately, a cure.

Education

Education and outreach are vital components of the work we do. To the nearly 1 million people who contact the Psoriasis Foundation each year, we offer a variety of informational materials, an award-winning Web site, community education meetings, affiliated support groups and access to patient educators through e-mail and our toll-free phone number.

For medical professionals, we offer accredited courses and workshops on treatment options, and publish a peer-reviewed journal and clinical manual providing practical instruction on treatment administration.

Advocacy

Through our advocacy efforts, we strengthen the voice of the psoriasis community. We educate lawmakers, lobby for increased federal funding for psoriasis research, and work to expand and improve private and public insurance coverage for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis treatment.

Research

Working with the medical and scientific communities, we support research toward new treatments for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis. We have awarded nearly \$4 million in seed grants to promising psoriasis research programs. The Psoriasis Foundation created and supports the National Psoriasis BioBank, which will help scientists identify the genes that cause psoriasis.

We also conduct patient surveys to show the impact that psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis can have on a person's daily life. This information is used to educate a wide variety of audiences, including medical professionals, legislators, insurers, media and the public.

Funding

According to the National Institutes of Health, as many as 7.5 million Americans have psoriasis. To serve this community, the Psoriasis Foundation relies on funding from a variety of sources.

Psoriasis Foundation programs are sustained through the support of psoriasis patients, their families, friends and medical providers. Corporations and foundations also fund our education, advocacy and research programs so that we can provide people with the information and tools they need to improve their lives.