Acitretin is an oral treatment that is FDA-approved to treat severe psoriasis in adults. It is a type of treatment called a retinoid, which is a synthetic form of vitamin A.

How effective is it?
Acitretin helps to stop inflammation in the skin and reduce psoriasis symptoms.

In a research study of patients taking an average daily dose of 40mg of acitretin, 52% of adults with psoriasis experienced at least a 75% improvement after 12 weeks.

Treating your psoriatic disease is important for disease management, reducing your risk for comorbidities (related health conditions) and improving your overall health and quality of life. Keep in mind that each person responds differently to treatments. Speak with your health care provider about what treatment may be most appropriate.

How does it work?
The exact way that acitretin works to control psoriasis is unknown. In general, it helps control the multiplication of cells, including the speed at which skin cells grow and shed. Acitretin also acts on the immune system to produce anti-inflammatory effects.

Your immune system protects your body from illness and infections. With psoriasis, the immune system is overactive. This causes inflammation of the skin and speeds up skin cell growth.

Fast facts about Acitretin
- Is available by prescription and is taken orally as a pill
- Can be taken long-term, during flares or in rotation with other treatments
- Is effective for treating plaque, pustular, palmoplantar, guttate and erythrodermic forms of psoriasis
- You cannot donate blood while taking acitretin, or for 3 years after stopping acitretin, due to the risk of women who are pregnant receiving it

Financial assistance
For information about programs that can help make acitretin more affordable contact our Patient Navigation Center at 800-723-9166 or education@psoriasis.org
Who can take it?
Adults over the age of 18 with psoriasis can take acitretin.

Who should not take it?
You should not take acitretin if you:
- Are pregnant, nursing or planning for a pregnancy
- Have severely impaired liver or kidney function
- Have chronically abnormal elevated blood lipid values
- Are also using methotrexate
- Are hypersensitive or have an allergic reaction to acitretin

Acitretin is more effective when used in combination with phototherapy. Acitretin increases your skin’s sensitivity to light. If you are using phototherapy, speak with your health care provider about lower doses of phototherapy to reduce the risk of burning.

What are the risks?
Acitretin is highly unsafe during pregnancy because it increases the risk of birth defects and miscarriage. Women who have the possibility of becoming pregnant must be enrolled in a registry program called Do Your P.A.R.T. (which requires them to be on at least two forms of birth control and take regular pregnancy tests) to be prescribed acitretin. It is recommended that women should be off acitretin for at least 3 years before getting pregnant.

There have been rare reports of:
- Liver problems, including hepatoxicity
- Elevated blood lipid values, such as triglycerides
- Worsening of existing skeletal abnormalities

Speak with your health care provider if you develop headaches, nausea, vomiting, changes in vision, depression, aching in joints or muscles, loss of feeling in hands/feet, dizziness or shortness of breath as these may be signs of more serious side effects.

Common side effects
In clinical trials, the most common side effects associated with acitretin were:
- Chapped and dry lips: Over 75% of patients treated with acitretin reported chapped and dry lips
- Hair loss or skin peeling: 50% to 75% of patients treated with Soriatane reported hair loss or skin peeling
- Dry, irritated or itchy skin: 25% to 50% of patients treated with acitretin reported dry, irritated or itchy skin

These side effects happen most often after the first dose and may decrease after additional doses or over time. There are other potential side effects for acitretin not listed in this fact sheet. Your health care provider will go over these with you. Regular check-ups and blood tests are done to monitor for side effects while taking acitretin.

Keep in mind that side effects observed in clinical trials may not predict actual rates of side effects.

What should I do next?
- Speak with your health care provider about whether acitretin is appropriate for you.
- Contact our Patient Navigation Center to find providers, discuss treatments and get help with accessing treatments (find contact information below).