Psoriasis [sore-EYE-ah-sis] is a chronic (lifelong) disease related to the immune system. It is not contagious. When you have psoriasis, your overactive immune system sends out signals that cause inflammation in the body and speed up the growth cycle of skin cells. It causes psoriasis lesions, which are abnormal changes to the skin in the form of plaques, pustules or areas of redness and swelling.

Psoriasis is different for each person. It can develop slowly with mild symptoms or quickly with severe symptoms. It can occur on any part of the body.

**What are the symptoms of psoriasis?**

The symptoms of psoriasis can be different depending on what type you have. There are 5 main types of psoriasis. Each type has different symptoms and characteristics. People with psoriasis may have more than one type of psoriasis. You can have different types of psoriasis at different times.

- **Plaque [plak] psoriasis** is the most common. It appears as raised patches of inflamed, itchy and painful skin with scales. For some people, the skin may be red with silvery white scales. For others, this may look more like a purple color. These plaques most often appear on the scalp, knees, elbows, and in or around the belly button and lower back, but can affect any area of the body.

- **Inverse psoriasis** is the second most common. It appears as inflamed deep-red skin that is smooth and not scaly. Inverse psoriasis affects body folds such as underarms, under breasts, in the genital area and buttocks. It can cause severe itching and pain and can be worsened by sweat and rubbing in these areas.

- **Guttate [GUH-tate] psoriasis** is the third most common. It appears as small, round red spots caused by inflammation that are raised and scaly. Guttate psoriasis often appears on the arms, legs and torso. However, it can affect any area of the body.

**Fast facts about psoriasis**

- More than 8 million Americans have psoriasis
- Psoriasis often starts between 15 and 25, but can develop at any age
- About 1 in 3 people with psoriasis develop psoriatic arthritis, which affects the joints, tendons and ligaments
- Psoriasis is also linked with comorbidities such as diabetes, heart disease, and depression
Pustular [PUHS-choo-lar] psoriasis is rarer. It appears as pustules (white, pus-filled, painful bumps) that may be surrounded by inflamed or reddened skin. The pustules are filled with pus that is not infectious. This means that they are not caused by an infection and are not contagious. Pustular psoriasis may appear only on certain areas of the body, such as the hands and feet, or may cover most of the body.

Erythrodermic [eh-REETH-ro-der-mik] psoriasis is even rarer. It can cause intense redness and shedding of skin layers in large sheets. It often affects nearly the whole body and can be life-threatening. Other symptoms include severe itching and pain, changes in heart rate and temperature, dehydration and nail changes. You should see your health care provider immediately if you think you are having an erythrodermic flare.

What are the treatment options for psoriasis?

Treating your psoriasis is important for effective disease management, reducing your risk for comorbidities and improving your overall health and quality of life. Work with your health care provider to set personal goals for managing your psoriasis. This will help you know what to expect from your treatments. For more information about treatment goals for psoriasis, visit psoriasis.org/treat-to-target.

Your health care provider will recommend a treatment plan based on what type of psoriasis you have, the severity of your psoriasis and your reaction to a treatment.

- **Biologics** are made from living sources such as human, animal or bacteria cells. They are given as an injection (shot) or intravenous (IV) infusion (slow drip of medicine into your vein). Biologics work by targeting and lowering the overactive parts of the immune system to decrease inflammation.

- **Oral treatments** are medicines that you take by mouth. Some oral treatments target specific cells of the immune system, and others may act on your whole immune system to decrease the overactivity.

- **Phototherapy** (light therapy) uses ultraviolet (UV) light to treat psoriasis under the care of your health care provider. Treatments can be given at your health care provider’s office, a psoriasis clinic or at home with a prescription home phototherapy unit.

- **Topical treatments** are applied directly onto your skin. They come in many different forms such as creams, lotions, ointments or shampoos. Topicals also come in different strengths, from over-the-counter that you may be able to purchase at major drugstores and supermarkets to prescription strength.

- **Other treatment approaches** may include complementary and integrative health that includes natural products, mind and body practices and other treatment methods. Some examples are pain management and health promotion such as dietary and lifestyle changes.

It is important to keep in mind that people with psoriasis may respond to treatments differently and at different times. Work with your health care provider to find the treatment plan that works best for you.

**What should I do next?**

Contact our Patient Navigation Center to find providers, prepare for appointments, discuss treatments and get help with accessing treatments (find contact information below).