You received this handout from a young person with psoriasis who asks for your understanding and support.

**What is psoriasis?**
Psoriasis is a genetic disease of the immune system that shows up in the skin and/or the joints. According to current studies, as many as 7.5 million Americans have psoriasis. The skin of people with psoriasis grows too fast. It can reproduce in 3 to 4 days, instead of the usual 28 to 30 days it takes normal skin cells. This rapidly growing skin builds up and forms inflamed, scaly lesions. Psoriasis can be limited to a few lesions or can involve moderate to large areas of skin. The severity of psoriasis varies from person to person. Approximately 10 percent to 30 percent of people with psoriasis will develop psoriatic arthritis, which is similar to rheumatoid arthritis but generally milder.

**You can help a young person with psoriasis. Here’s how:**
- Be familiar with psoriasis and understand that it is a medical problem. Help educate others if the young person wants you to.
- Sometimes children and teens with psoriasis are teased about their skin. Some can handle teasing on their own, while others may want your help.
- Sunlight can be helpful for psoriasis, but children with psoriasis need to avoid sunburn, as this could worsen their condition.
- Acknowledge the difficulty that the child must have living with psoriasis, and demonstrate that you understand and care.
- A young person with psoriasis may need to apply skin creams or ointments and may need time to do so.
- Skin with psoriasis is more easily damaged than other skin. Since each person is different, talk to the person with psoriasis about any limitations.

**What do you need to know about psoriasis?**
- Psoriasis is a disease of the immune system.
- There is no cure for psoriasis.
- Psoriasis goes through cycles: sometimes better, at other times worse.
- There are many different treatments to manage the symptoms, but no one treatment is effective for everyone.
- Young people need support to help them live with psoriasis. Ask how you can support them.
- Young people may experience emotional responses to having psoriasis, such as embarrassment, anger or sadness.
- Sometimes young people who have psoriasis are teased or avoided by their peers. Educating people about this disease can help stop these reactions.
- It is not contagious. It cannot be spread from one person to another.
- Psoriasis can occur at any age.
- Psoriasis can be physically painful. Inflamed lesions can crack and bleed. Itching may be a constant problem.

For more information:
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