Dear Parent,

Today your child learned about psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis because one of his or her classmates is affected by the disease(s).

Psoriasis is a non-contagious, genetic disease that affects the skin and nails, while psoriatic arthritis affects the joints. Psoriasis affects as many as 8 million people in the U.S. including about one percent of children and teens from infancy to age 18. Every year, roughly 20,000 kids younger than 10 are diagnosed with psoriasis. One-third of all people with psoriasis also have psoriatic arthritis.

Psoriasis causes skin cells to reproduce too quickly. Skin affected by psoriasis takes only three to four days to grow instead of the usual 28 to 30 days for normal skin cells. This rapid skin growth builds up and forms silvery white scaly lesions that itch, cause pain and redness. This type of psoriasis is called plaque psoriasis and is the most common type. Psoriasis can be limited to a few lesions, or can involve moderate to large areas of skin.

Psoriatic arthritis causes pain, stiffness and swelling in and around the joints. Psoriatic arthritis can affect any joint in the body, including the back, hips, wrists and fingers, and can be physically painful. It can cause people to move slowly and make it difficult to sit, stand or write for long periods of time.

Children and teens may also experience emotional responses to having psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis which include embarrassment, anger, sadness, or even depression. Sometimes those who have psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are teased or avoided by their peers, causing feelings of isolation. You can do your part to help by offering support and understanding, and by encouraging your child to do the same.

For more information about psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis, please contact the National Psoriasis Foundation’s Patient Navigation Center at 800-723-9166, option 1 or by sending an email to education@psoriasis.org.

Sincerely,