Psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis are chronic (lifelong) diseases. This means that you will need to work with your health care provider long-term to manage your psoriatic disease effectively. Additionally, psoriatic disease is linked to an increased risk for comorbidities (related health conditions). So it is important that you have your own health care team, which may consist of different types of health care providers.

The following are a few types of health care providers that are valuable to have on your health care team:

- A **dermatologist** is a doctor who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of the skin, scalp, hair and nails. We recommend finding a dermatologist who has experience in treating psoriasis.
- A **rheumatologist** is a doctor who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of arthritis and other diseases of the joints, muscles and bone. As with psoriasis, we recommend finding a rheumatologist who has experience treating psoriatic arthritis.
- A **primary care physician** (also called PCP or general practitioner) is a doctor who has training in fields such as family medicine, pediatrics or internal medicine. Your PCP plays an important role in treating acute (short-term) illnesses, managing regular check-ups for signs or symptoms of comorbidities and referring you to specialists.

You may choose to have other health care providers on your health care team to help you achieve your overall health goals. These may include a dietitian or nutritionist, mental health provider, naturopathic doctor, physical therapist, wellness coach or other health care professionals.
How do I establish a positive relationship with my health care provider?

Both you and your health care provider are experts when it comes to managing your health. Your health care provider knows about diseases, diagnosing and treatments. You know about your body, goals for your health, preferences on how to treat your disease and other personal circumstances. You and your health care provider should work together to decide on a treatment that will work best for you.

The patient-provider relationship that you have should involve trust, support and clear communication. You should feel comfortable asking questions or sharing any concerns.

Learn about your disease and the treatment options before meeting with your health care provider. This will help prepare you for a productive appointment.

During your appointment, you and your health care provider should speak about how severe your psoriatic disease is and what your treatment options are based on your severity. Together, you and your health care provider should discuss the possible benefits and risks of each treatment option and decide on a treatment plan that is the most appropriate for you.

What questions should I ask when looking for a provider?

Working closely with a health care provider that specializes in psoriatic disease is an important part of diagnosing and effectively treating your disease. Other factors that you might consider are how close the office is from your home or work, their office hours or if you prefer a male or female provider.

If you are looking for a provider in a directory, we recommend that you call their offices and ask the following questions to make sure that they are the best match for treating your psoriatic disease:

1. Are you currently accepting new patients?
2. Do you have experience treating patients with psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis?
3. What is the earliest appointment that you have available? Is there a wait-list (or cancellation list) that I could put my name on for canceled appointments?
4. Do you accept my insurance?
5. Do I need a referral to make an appointment? Should my PCP submit that referral or can I?
6. Do you offer all types of treatment options for psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis such as biologics, oral treatments, phototherapy and prescription topicals?

These are important questions to have answered before choosing a health care provider. However, there may be times that a receptionist is unable to answer your questions. You may have to ask to speak with a medical assistant if the receptionist is unable to answer your questions about experience with psoriatic disease or treatments offered. It may also be helpful to speak with an office manager about insurance or billing questions.

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].