

Dealing with the uncertainty of Psoriasis

Psoriasis is a painful, itchy skin disease that causes patches of thick, red skin with silvery scales. This happens when the skin cells grow at an abnormally fast rate, which causes the buildup of psoriasis lesions.

These patches usually appear on the elbows, knees, scalp, or back, but they can show up elsewhere on the body. Psoriasis also can affect the joints, with some patients also getting a form of arthritis called psoriatic arthritis.

How do I get psoriasis?

While there is no known cause for psoriasis, scientists have established that the immune system and genetics play major roles in its development. Usually, something triggers psoriasis to flare.¹

Men and women develop psoriasis at equal rates. Psoriasis often develops between the ages of 15 and 35, but it can develop at any age. A small percentage of those with psoriasis get it before age 10. Some infants have psoriasis, but this is considered very rare.

There is no cure for the condition, but various topical treatments are often prescribed. Psoriasis is not contagious, and psoriasis lesions are not infectious.

How is psoriasis diagnosed?

Testing for psoriasis is very basic because there are no blood tests or tools that can indicate the condition. Usually, a dermatologist or other healthcare provider simply examines the affected skin to determine if it is psoriasis.

This can be a challenging diagnosis because many rashes and skin conditions resemble psoriasis. Some of the conditions that are often misdiagnosed as psoriasis include seborrhea, dandruff, and eczema.

Distinguishing psoriasis from other skin conditions is difficult, but it helps to understand the types of psoriasis and some of the other conditions psoriasis is often mistaken for:

- Plaque psoriasis is the most common type, affecting at least 80 to 90 percent of people with psoriasis, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.
- Guttate psoriasis is mostly seen in children and young adults and causes small, pink lesions on the skin of the trunk, upper arms, thighs, and scalp.
- Inverse psoriasis shows up as bright red, smooth, and shiny spots under the breasts, in the groin area, and/or the skin folds around the buttocks and genitals, and under the arms.
- Pustular psoriasis is rare, but it is mostly seen in adults. It causes pustules on the hands and feet, but it may cover most of the body in rare and very serious cases.
- Erythrodermic psoriasis is rare, but it is a very serious condition affecting most of the body, causing skin to appear burned. It also causes severe itching, burning and peeling, a fast heart rate, and body temperature changes.

If your skin is irritated or you have rash-like symptoms, you may need to consult with a dermatologist. Your Best Doctors benefit lets you dig deeper into any diagnosis with an expert review of your medical records and an objective look at your overall health picture.

¹<https://www.psoriasis.org/about-psoriasis>

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