



August 2018

Psoriasis Awareness Month

Psoriasis is a chronic autoimmune disease that causes the rapid overproduction and buildup of skin cells. This buildup of cells causes scaling on the skin's surface. Scales typically develop on joints, such as elbows and knees, but can be anywhere.

It's not known for sure why some people develop psoriasis but both genetics and environmental factors seem to play a role.

Symptoms. Psoriasis signs and symptoms are different for everyone. Common ones include:

- ◆ red, raised, inflamed patches of skin covered with thick, whitish-silvery scales
- ◆ small scaling spots (commonly seen in children)
- ◆ dry, cracked skin that may bleed
- ◆ itching, burning or soreness
- ◆ thickened, pitted or ridged nails
- ◆ swollen, stiff and painful joints



Patches can range from a few spots of dandruff-like scaling to major eruptions that cover large areas.

Most types of psoriasis go through cycles, flaring for a few weeks or months, then subsiding or even disappear completely for a time, known as in remission.

Types of psoriasis. There are several types of psoriasis. **Plaque psoriasis** is the most common and accounts for about 80 percent of psoriasis cases. Some other types are pustular and nail psoriasis.

Risk factors and triggers. Anyone can develop psoriasis, which typically starts or worsens because of a trigger. These triggers aren't the same for everyone. The most common include:

- ◆ **Family history.** One of the most significant factors.
- ◆ **Viral and bacterial infections.** Such as HIV and recurring infections, particularly strep throat.
- ◆ **Stress.** Impacts your immune system.
- ◆ **Smoking or heavy alcohol consumption.** Not only increases risk but also increases the severity.
- ◆ **Others.** Obesity, low Vitamin D, certain medications.

Complications. People with psoriasis are at greater risk of developing certain diseases. A major one is **psoriatic arthritis**, which causes joint damage and loss of function. About 15 percent of people with psoriasis will develop psoriatic arthritis.

Diagnosis. If you think that you may have psoriasis, see your doctor for an examination. In most cases, diagnosis of psoriasis is fairly straightforward.

- ◆ **Physical exam and medical history.** Psoriasis can usually be diagnosed by taking your medical history and examining your skin, scalp and nails.
- ◆ **Skin biopsy.** A small sample of skin (biopsy) is taken and examined under a microscope to determine the exact type of psoriasis.

Treatment. Treatments reduce inflammation and clear the skin. The main goal is to stop the skin cells from growing so quickly. Treatments can be divided into three main types:

- ◆ Topical - creams and ointments that you apply to your skin.
- ◆ Light therapy - natural or artificial ultraviolet light.
- ◆ Systemic medications - oral or injected drugs used to treat severe psoriasis.



There is no cure for psoriasis, but symptoms can be managed.

Psoriasis isn't contagious. You can't pass the skin condition from one person to another. Touching a psoriatic lesion on another person won't cause you to develop the condition.

Autoimmune disease. A condition in which your immune system mistakenly attacks your body.

- ◆ The immune system normally guards against germs like bacteria and viruses.
- ◆ When it senses these foreign invaders, it sends out an army of fighter cells to attack them.
- ◆ Normally, the immune system can tell the difference between foreign cells and your own cells.
- ◆ In an autoimmune disease, the immune system mistakes part of your body — like your joints or skin — as foreign. It releases proteins called autoantibodies that attack healthy cells.

Your Family's Health History

Get to know your family better by talking about health. Do any health conditions seem to run in your family? For example, have many people in your family had diabetes, cancer, a heart attack, or anything else?

Now is a great time to find out. Ask about the health history of your grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and the rest. Sharing this information with your health care team will help them provide better care for you.

- ◆ It helps them know which medical tests to suggest for detecting early warning signs of certain diseases.
- ◆ Early testing helps because doctors can try to prevent a disease or treat it as soon as possible.

“My Family Health Portrait” is an online tool that makes it easy to collect the information in one place—and it's private.

- ◆ It's simple to fill out.
- ◆ It's fast, taking only about 15-30 minutes.
- ◆ It doesn't keep a record of your data.
- ◆ It's available only to you for downloading or printing.
- ◆ After that, it's up to you whether you want to share the information with family members or provide it to your health care team.



For more information, visit www.genome.gov/17516481. Source: NIH News in Health December 2017

School Starts Soon— Is Your Child Fully Vaccinated?

Make sure your children are up to date on their vaccines before the first day of school.

SCHOOL IMMUNIZATIONS



Your state may require children to get vaccines against certain diseases before going to school. If you're unsure of your state's school requirements, now is the time to check with your child's doctor, your child's school, or your health department. That way, your child can get any needed vaccines before the back-to-school rush.

School-age children, from preschoolers to college students, need vaccines to protect them from diseases that can be serious and sometimes life-threatening. Thanks to vaccines, many vaccine-preventable diseases have become rare but cases and outbreaks can still happen.

Getting every dose of every recommended vaccine:

- ◆ Provides children the best protection possible.
- ◆ Is one of the most important things you can do to ensure your children's long-term health.
- ◆ Helps protect the health of friends, classmates, and others in your community such as newborns too young to receive the maximum protection of vaccines, or people with weakened immune systems.

CDC has [online resources](#) and tools to help you make sure your kids are up to date on recommended vaccines and protected from serious diseases such as the recommended [Childhood Immunization Schedule](#) and the [childhood vaccine quiz](#).

It's Not Too Late

If your child has missed any of their vaccines, get them caught up as soon as possible.

Downloading an app can help you avoid getting a sunburn.

55% of people think the higher the SPF on a sunscreen, the less often they have to reapply it. A higher SPF may be a stronger shield against UV rays, but you still need to reapply sunscreen every two hours or after you sweat a lot or swim.

QSun, a free app for both Android and iOS:

- ◆ Avoid a painful sunburn by using this app's sunscreen calculator.
- ◆ It determines how much sunscreen you need to apply according to your height, weight and clothing choice.
- ◆ You can also scan the barcode of your sunblock and the app will analyze whether it's the right pick for you.
- ◆ Plus QSun issues alerts to let you know when it's time to reapply.

