

What You Need To Know About Psoriasis

(NAPSA)—Doctors may have good news for many of the estimated 5 million Americans—approximately 3 percent of the population—who have psoriasis and the people who care about them. New and improved treatments may help ease the discomfort of psoriasis, and researchers continue to unlock clues related to the genetic factors of the disease.

Psoriasis is a chronic condition causing scaling and inflammation of the skin. It primarily affects adults, though it can occur in any age group. Typically psoriasis results in patches of thick, red skin covered with silvery scales. These patches, which are sometimes referred to as plaques, usually itch or feel sore. They most often occur on the elbows, knees, other parts of the legs, scalp, lower back, face, palms, and soles of the feet, but they can occur anywhere. See a doctor if you have such symptoms.

The itching, pain and plaques can interfere with walking, sleep, work, sports and caring for yourself, your family and your home. Some people feel self-conscious about their appearance.

Psoriasis is an autoimmune disease and not contagious, but it may be inherited. Researchers continue to study large numbers of families affected by psoriasis and have identified a number of genes linked to the disease.

People with psoriasis may notice that there are times when their skin worsens, called flares—then improves. Conditions that may cause flares include infections, stress, and changes in climate. Also, certain medicines may trigger an outbreak or worsen the disease.

Doctors generally treat psoriasis based on the type and severity



Doctors say psoriasis is a serious disease but it is not contagious and effective treatments are available.

of the disease with what's sometimes called the "1-2-3" approach. In step 1, medicines are applied to the skin. Step 2 uses light treatments. Step 3 involves taking pills or shots to treat the whole immune system. Some people benefit from a combination of treatments.

Since discovering that inflammation in psoriasis is triggered by T cells, researchers have been studying new treatments that quiet immune system reactions in the skin. Among these are treatments that block the activity of T cells or block the proteins that promote inflammation.

The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), a part of the Department of Health and Human Services' National Institutes of Health (NIH), supports research into the causes, treatment and prevention of arthritis and musculoskeletal and skin diseases such as psoriasis. For the latest information on dealing with the disease, go to www.niams.nih.gov or call (877) 22-NIAMS (226-4267). You can read about psoriasis online or order a copy of "Questions and Answers About Psoriasis" to be mailed to you.