

Psoriasis - What Is Psoriasis?

Contributed by vicki gail
Wednesday, 26 March 2008
Last Updated Sunday, 27 July 2008

WHAT IS PSORIASIS?

What is psoriasis? It is a disease of the skin and joints. According to National Institutes of Health, some 5.8 to 7.5 million Americans, 2-3% of the world's population, are afflicted with this disease.

It is not contagious, but it lasts a lifetime. The most common form, plaque psoriasis, creates raised red lesions or patches surrounded by silvery white dead skin scales, commonly referred to as scale.

Psoriasis – More Condition Symptoms

It itches, it burns. It can hurt. It may cause the skin to crack and bleed. Sufferers may be unable to sleep at night. Pain, especially when it affects the joints, can make work difficult.

Patches can occur anywhere on the body–arms, legs, knees, scalp or even genital areas! Knees and elbows are the most common. Use this link to find more information on scalp psoriasis.

Scalp Psoriasis Picture

Sometimes it is very mild, and one needs a doctor or skin specialist to tell if he or she has it. It can get so severe that lesions cover the whole body and hospitalization is required. It affects men and women equally. It tends to occur between ages 16-22; then another peak is ages 57-60. It is more prevalent in Caucasians (2.5 %) than African Americans (1.3%).

It is not particular who it affects. Many luminaries from Joseph Stalin to the famous American novelist John Updike, have been infected with it. So was the 21 year old, CariDee English, America's Next Top Model® 2006 and spokesperson for the National Psoriasis Foundation, as well as Jerry Mathers, actor in Leave it to Beaver.

Psoriasis's name comes from the Greek word, "psora," which means to itch. It may have been the skin condition called Tzaraat in the Bible, and later was thought to be a form of leprosy. In 1841 a Viennese dermatologist, Ferdinand von Hebra, gave psoriasis its name.

Guttate ‐ Plaque ‐ Pustular ‐ Erythrodermic Psoriasis

There are several types of psoriasis. Plaque psoriasis is the most common form, affecting some 80% of psoriasis sufferers. With Plaque psoriasis the areas affected are circular or oval in shape; they are red and covered with silvery scales.

Here's how you can recognize the other types: Guttate‐ small red skin spots; Inverse‐occurs in armpits, groin and skin folds; Pustular‐white blisters surrounded by red skin; Erythrodermic‐ large areas of intense redness.

Pustular Psoriasis Picture

Various factors are thought to "trigger" psoriasis: reactions to some drugs, emotional stress, skin injury and certain infections. Psoriasis may occur in areas where there has been injury to the skin, including vaccinations, sunburns and scratches. Certain medications are associated with triggering and/or worsening psoriasis. The psychiatric drug, Lithium, has been associated with triggering psoriasis as has antimalarials, Inderal, a high blood medication; Quinidine, a heart medication, and the arthritis medication, Indomethacin. Allergies, diet, excessive alcohol consumption, smoking, even dry weather, though not proven, are thought to trigger psoriasis.

Psoriasis Symptoms

Psoriasis causes joint inflammation for about 10-15% of people; called psoriatic arthritis.

Having psoriasis can affect its victims emotionally. If it occurs on the legs, many adopt "out of sight, out of mind," wear slacks or jeans, and go on with life. More difficult if it occurs on the arms or face. Many say they suffer from a loss in self confidence and are concerned about the "stigma" attached to it. The National Psoriasis Foundation connects people with support groups. They learn quickly that they are not alone and much is being done to find a cure.

[Click here for more information on Psoriasis Symptoms.](#)

While it is not contagious, it appears to be hereditary. As yet there is no known cure, but there are ways to alleviate some of the pain or discomfort.

[For information on Psoriasis Treatment click here.](#)

[For information on Psoriasis Medicine click here.](#)