THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PSORIASIS

What is psoriasis?
- A chronic skin disease that results from a malfunction of the immune system.
- Skin becomes inflamed and growth of skin cells increases.
- Typical symptoms include patches of red, irritated skin, sometimes with silvery scales.
- Elbows, knees, and scalp are most commonly affected.
- Psoriasis is not an infection, and so it is not contagious.

Who gets it?
- Approximately 1% to 2% of people in the United States have psoriasis.
- Psoriasis can develop at any age but usually first appears between the ages of 15 and 35 years.
- Some people inherit genes that make them more likely to develop psoriasis but that does not mean that they will.
- Approximately one third of people with psoriasis have at least 1 affected family member.
- Triggers for psoriasis include smoking, alcoholism, sun exposure, skin injury, and certain medications.

How is it treated?
- There is no cure, but lifestyle changes and medical therapy can significantly reduce the effects.
- Topical skin creams and ointments include corticosteroids and retinoids.
- Light therapy (called phototherapy) can slow the growth of affected skin cells by controlled exposure to UVB rays.
- Systemic medications include methotrexate and cyclosporine.
- Lifestyle changes include stopping smoking, minimizing alcohol use, and maintaining ideal weight.

How is psoriasis related to psoriatic arthritis?
- Approximately 10% of people with psoriasis develop a form of arthritis called psoriatic arthritis.
- Symptoms include painful, swollen joints and other arthritis symptoms.
- Psoriatic arthritis typically appears about 10 years after the onset of psoriasis.

For More Information

Information on psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis for patients and caregivers, from the National Psoriasis Foundation.

www.skincarephysicians.com/psoriasisnet/medical_screenings.html
Information on 5 medical screenings recommended for people with psoriasis, from the American Academy of Dermatology.

Information on psoriatic arthritis from the Arthritis Foundation.