

# THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PSORIASIS

In the Clinic  
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## 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

[www.psoriasis.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1336](http://www.psoriasis.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1336)  
Information on psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis for patients and caregivers, from the National Psoriasis Foundation.

[www.skincarephysicians.com/psoriasisnet/medical\\_screenings.html](http://www.skincarephysicians.com/psoriasisnet/medical_screenings.html)  
Information on 5 medical screenings recommended for people with psoriasis, from the American Academy of Dermatology.

[www.arthritis.org/disease-center.php?disease\\_id=21&df=definition](http://www.arthritis.org/disease-center.php?disease_id=21&df=definition)  
Information on psoriatic arthritis from the Arthritis Foundation.

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