11 Things You Might Not Know About Psoriasis

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Facts About Psoriasis

When most people think of psoriasis, they think of itchy, scaly patches on the skin, and little else. While it's true psoriasis usually involves skin lesions, psoriasis is actually a complex group of conditions that doesn't just affect the skin.

Let’s look at some facts about psoriasis that you may not be aware of.

1. Psoriasis Runs in Families

If you have a family member who has psoriasis, you are more likely to be diagnosed with the condition. Should you develop a skin condition and you have a relative that has a diagnosis of psoriasis, be sure to tell your health care provider. While psoriasis is often diagnosed by observation, skin scrapings may be taken to confirm the diagnosis.

2. People of Any Age Can Develop Psoriasis

Most people who have psoriasis are diagnosed in their mid-teens and mid-30s, but it can occur at any age. It may develop early in life — 10–15% of people who have psoriasis are diagnosed before the age of 10. However, psoriasis in infants is rare.

3. Plaque Psoriasis Is the Most Common Type

Ninety percent of individuals who have psoriasis are diagnosed with plaque psoriasis. Plaque psoriasis lesions are red, white patches, or silver colored. They can be intensely itchy and may crack and bleed.

They may arise anyplace on the body, however are most common on the scalp, lower back, elbows and knees. Psoriatic lesions may also affect the eyes, ears face, lips and buttocks. While uncommon, lesions may develop in the nose or mouth.

4. There Are Four Other Types, Too

In addition to plaque psoriasis, there are four other types of psoriasis. They are:

- **Guttate Psoriasis —** Guttate psoriasis may develop after an episode of strep throat. The lesions are widespread, often covering the entire body. Guttate psoriasis most commonly appears for the first time when people are children, teens or young adults.
- **Inverse Psoriasis —** Patches of inverse psoriasis are itchy, shiny and red and appear in skin folds. It most commonly affects the groin, armpits, backs of the knees and areas below women’s breasts. Lesions

arise in the presence of heat, moisture and skin irritation. They may develop if other illnesses are present. If the lesions are in the groin; pain, cracking and a secondary fungal infection may develop. Painful lesions may develop on a man's penis or in the rectum.

- **Pustular Psoriasis —** Pustular psoriasis lesions are characterized by red patches which contain lesions filled with pus. Like other forms of psoriatic lesions, pustular psoriatic lesions are not contagious. They most commonly appear on the hands and feet, however the lesions may occur on any part of the body.
- **Erythrodermic Psoriasis —** Erythrodermic psoriasis is a rare disease and can be fatal. It most commonly develops among individuals who suffer from unstable plaque psoriasis. Intensely itchy red lesions suddenly appear and cover the entire body. An intense fiery sensation occurs. The skin separates from an afflicted person's body. **Erythrodermic psoriasis is a medical emergency and requires immediate treatment.**

Next page: seven more facts about psoriasis.

5. People Usually Develop Psoriatic Arthritis in Their 30s, 40s and 50s

Around one third of people who have plaque psoriasis develop psoriatic arthritis. Your likelihood of developing psoriatic arthritis is not related to the severity of your psoriasis, and the speed of onset following a psoriasis diagnosis is variable. It may first arise after trauma occurs to a joint.

Swelling, redness and joint tenderness are characteristic, and it is most pronounced in the joints of the fingers and toes. Eye irritation, nail problems and morning may be present. Early treatment can help to maintain mobility, reduce discomfort and protect the affected joints.

6. Psoriasis Is a Systemic Disease

Psoriasis is a type of autoimmune disorder. The skin cells of people who have plaque psoriasis multiply at an abnormally rapid rate — twice as fast as skin cells of people who do not have psoriasis. Cells within plaques reproduce one thousand more rapidly than healthy skin cells do, but the psoriasis affects all of the skin cells, not just the ones that form lesions.

7. Psoriasis Elevates Your Risk of Developing Nail Problems

A diagnosis of plaque psoriasis doubles a person's risk for developing fingernail and toenail problems, including psoriasis nails. Almost four out of five people who have psoriatic arthritis develop nail problems. Nails may be rough and discolored and may separate from the nailbed.

8. Drinking Plenty of Water Can Help Ease Symptoms

The skin is the largest organ of the body, and one of its primary functions is to rid the body of toxins. Drinking plenty of water helps to flush irritation compounds out of the body. Additionally, well-hydrated skin is less likely to crack and cause discomfort.

9. Herbs May Help Reduce Psoriasis Symptoms

Herbs may be used to reduce inflammation, enhance detoxification, and fight secondary infections. While some internal herbal remedies provide rapid relief of psoriasis symptoms, most must be consistently used for at least two months in order to reach maximum effectiveness.

Burdock, dandelion root, kudzu and chickweed support detoxification. Herbs such as lemon balm, oat straw, passion flower and calendula are soothing. They can help to relieve irritability and itchiness.

Itch relief is important. If you scratch lesions, you may create small open areas which may develop infections. Scratching lesions encourages the release of chemical compounds called histamines, which make you itch even more.

10. Topical Remedies Can Provide Rapid Relief

Many topical remedies are available that relieve psoriatic symptoms. Pharmaceutical drugs may be prescribed and over-the-counter remedies like hydrocortisone cream offer itch relief. Herbal remedies like chickweed salve moisturize promote healing of irritated tissues, while essential oils of lemon balm, chamomile and lavender can also be helpful.

11. Diet Can Helps Control Symptoms

Many sufferers of psoriasis have food sensitivities and allergies. Identification and avoidance of irritating substance can therefore reduce psoriasis symptoms. Common offenders include the link between psoriasis and gluten, white sugar, dyes, preservatives and other food additives. Monosodium glutamate, MSG, is recognized by many skin care experts as particularly irritating for individuals who have psoriasis.

Read food labels carefully. Eat a simple diet. Include foods or supplements which are rich in omega 3 fatty acids in the diet.