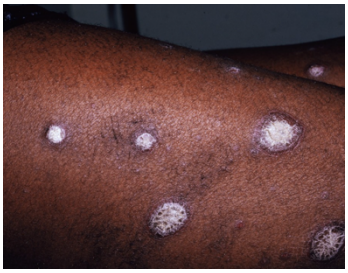
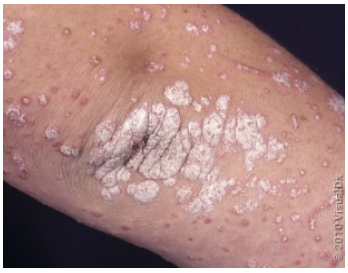
DOCTOR EDGES™

HAIR RESTORATION | DERMATOLOGY | AESTHETICS | WELLNESS

Psoriasis





Psoriasis, a prevalent noncontagious skin condition, manifests in various forms, including plaque, inverse, guttate, erythrodermic, and pustular psoriasis. Plaque psoriasis, the most common subtype affecting about 85% of cases, presents with red, raised lesions covered by scale. It affects roughly 2%-3% of the global population, characterized by thickened, scaly patches. While its exact cause remains unknown, it's attributed to an overactive immune system attacking the skin and organs. Genetics play a significant role, although psoriasis can occur without a family history. Environmental triggers such as stress, pregnancy, skin injury, bacterial infections, smoking, alcohol, and certain medications can exacerbate symptoms.

Who's At Risk

Plaque psoriasis is typically diagnosed in the teenage or early adult years, but it can also first appear in elderly patients aged 50 to 70. About 30% of people with plaque psoriasis have a family history of the condition. Certain medications, including beta blockers, NSAIDs, lithium, antimalarial drugs, and oral steroids, can trigger flares. TNF-alpha inhibitors, used to treat various conditions, can sometimes induce plaque psoriasis. People with psoriasis are at increased risk for other health issues like heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, sleep problems, mental health issues, social stigma, cancer, and even death.

Signs & Symptoms

Plaque psoriasis lesions are raised patches of irritated skin with a thick, white scale. They appear pink or red on lighter skin and may be purple, gray, or dark brown on darker skin. Common areas affected include elbows, knees, trunk, buttocks, belly button, palms, soles, and scalp. Plaques often develop on skin areas subject to trauma or friction, like hands, feet, knees, elbows, and scalp, and may also appear in body folds without the typical white scale. Symptoms include itching, skin/joint pain, tendon or ligament inflammation, swollen fingers/toes, hair loss, eye irritation, and nail changes like pits, yellow-brown spots, or onycholysis. Psoriasis can be mistaken for conditions like fungal infections, eczema, allergic reactions, or skin irritation. A medical professional can help diagnose if the cause is unclear.

Self-Care Guidelines

Most beneficial treatments for plaque psoriasis work in part due to their ability to alleviate the body's abnormal immune attack of the skin and help prevent the excessive buildup of skin cells or flakes.

- Bathe daily to help soften scales and moisten the skin. Avoid harsh soaps and scrubbing the skin as these may worsen psoriasis. Moisturizing soaps and soap substitutes, such as unscented Dove Sensitive Skin Beauty Bar, Vanicream Cleansing Bar, and CeraVe Psoriasis Cleanser, are milder products for the skin.
- The application of moisturizers after water exposure or bathing may be helpful. Heavier oil-based moisturizers help to retain water in the skin better than water-based moisturizers. Thicker moisturizers such as petroleum jelly (Vaseline), Aquaphor Healing Ointment, Eucerin Original Healing Cream, Vanicream, or CeraVe Healing Ointment can be applied to damp skin daily after bathing. Use cream and ointments rather than lotions because lotions can dry out the skin.
- Apply over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream or ointment (0.5% or 1%) twice daily for 2-3 weeks at a time to help reduce itch and irritation. Stronger topical steroids are typically required for thicker psoriasis plaques. Long-term use of topical steroids should include periodic times of no treatment each month to avoid thinning of the skin.
- Use of products with salicylic acid (shampoos, cleansers, and ointments), such as Neutrogena T/Sal, can help soften and remove thick psoriasis scale in the scalp.
- Small doses of natural sunlight may be helpful, such as 10-15 minutes approximately 2 or 3 times per week. Avoid too much sun; however, and protect your healthy skin from excessive sun exposure to help prevent premature aging of the skin and skin cancers.
- Follow a healthy diet to maintain an ideal weight. (Being overweight may make plaque psoriasis worse.)

Patient Support Resources

The National Psoriasis Foundation (**https://www.psoriasis.org/**) is a useful resource for patients and health professionals that has additional information regarding psoriasis and the various available treatments. The National Psoriasis Foundation website includes access to psoriasis-related articles, psoriasis research, a directory of health care professionals with an expertise in psoriasis, and opportunities for patients to volunteer or get involved in upcoming events.

When to Seek Medical Care

Individuals with psoriasis should see a medical professional such as a board-certified Doctor Edges dermatologist or physician if self-care measures are not helpful, if the psoriasis is widespread, or if there is joint or bone pain in the setting of psoriasis. All individuals who are of child-bearing potential, pregnant, or breast-feeding should discuss the safety of all available psoriasis treatments with their medical professional prior to use. Our Doctor Edges expert physicians can find effective solutions for managing psoriasis, tailored to your specific needs, to alleviate symptoms and enhance your quality of life.