

Living with Psoriasis

More than 7.5 million US adults are affected by psoriasis.

1 Introduction

Psoriasis is a common skin disease found in people of all ages and skin colors. It is a result of an overactive immune system which accelerates the growth of skin cells. In cases of psoriasis, the skin cells quickly complete their life cycle, then accumulate on the surface of the skin. This buildup makes up the patches of red, itchy skin that is characteristic of psoriasis. Psoriasis is chronic and cyclical, meaning that it is a long-term disease that can flare up as well as go into remission. While there is not a complete understanding of the cause of psoriasis, researchers suspect that both genetics and environmental conditions may be contributing factors.

2 Signs and Symptoms

Psoriasis is a disease that affects the skin, causing symptoms such as:

- Red patches of skin with scales
- Dry, cracked skin that itches
- Thick, pitted nails
- Soreness or burning sensations around patches
- Painful, swollen joints

3 Risk Factors

Although psoriasis can develop in all people regardless of age or race, there are some factors that increase your risk, including:

- Family history of psoriasis
- Stress
- Smoking

Additionally, for those who have psoriasis, there are triggers that can increase the likelihood of a flare up of the disease:

- Infection (e.g. strep throat)
- Cold, dry weather
- Heavy alcohol use
- Stress
- Injury to the skin

5 Treatments

While there is no cure for psoriasis, there are treatments available that can help alleviate uncomfortable symptoms. These treatments fall into three broad categories: topical treatments, systemic medications and light therapy. Topical treatments (e.g. creams and ointments) and light therapy are generally used in cases of mild to moderate psoriasis. For more severe cases, systemic medications — biologics, retinoids, cyclosporine or methotrexate — may be prescribed.

Did you know?

Roughly 1/3 of people with psoriasis will be diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis.

For more information on psoriasis and supportive resources, please visit www.psoriasis.org.

References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/psoriasis/index.htm>

<https://www.healthline.com/health/psoriasis>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/psoriasis/symptoms-causes/svc-20355840>