

Psoriasis is a skin condition whereby areas are covered in pink or red coloured patches with white scales.

What to look for

- deep pink, raised patches of skin with white scales appearing anywhere on the body except the face.
- pitting and thickening of the fingernails and toenails.

The skin cells multiply much faster than normal, healthy cells and the overproduction of these cells is what causes the raised patches of skin.

Psoriasis tends to run in families. It is not contagious and is common among people with fair skin.

Outbreaks are triggered by the immune system and can affect other parts of the body, particularly the joints. This condition is usually not dangerous although it may be stressful and embarrassing and with appropriate treatment, symptoms generally subside within weeks.

Causes

A variety of factors, ranging from emotional stress to infection, can accelerate an episode of psoriasis.

Excess alcohol consumption, incorrect diets, injured skin, obesity, and certain drugs can aggravate psoriasis.

Traditional Treatment

This condition is not curable but it usually responds well to treatments. A standard treatment recommended by many doctors is to soak in a warm bath for 10 to 15 minutes, then immediately apply a topical ointment such as petroleum jelly, which helps your skin retain moisture. Your doctor may recommend another medication which is a little stronger.

Treatment with capsaicin may also be effective. Because capsaicin can burn and severely damage the skin if used incorrectly, try this only under a doctor's supervision.

Dietary Considerations

Fish oil is usually extremely beneficial to sufferers - try a fish-oil capsule containing EPA four times a day.

Vitamin A, Vitamin D, Vitamin C and E, Calcium, Magnesium, Lecithin, linseed oil, Kelp, Garlic and Evening Primrose Oil.

Be careful with the doses and always take supplements under Professional supervision.

Vitamin B complex may promote healthy skin and rubbing concentrated vitamin E ointment into your scalp two or three times a week can be helpful.

Some research has suggested that eating too much citrus fruit can aggravate psoriasis, and that psoriasis patients, like eczema patients, cannot metabolise fatty acids. To help prevent flare ups, adopt a diet high in fish and raw vegetables, and low in fatty meats and acidic fruits.

Personal Care

- For scalp psoriasis, wash your hair with a coal-tar shampoo or with a mixture of cedar wood and juniper or lemon oils.
- Expose areas of inflamed skin to the morning or afternoon sun but be extremely careful to not stay out too long and put sunscreen on all the other parts of your body.
- Regular exercise will help your entire system.

When to seek further professional advice

- your skin inflammation does not respond to any form of treatment;