



What is Psoriasis? Psoriasis is a common skin condition that affects nearly 2 percent of the general population. It affects both men and women, generally appearing in adolescence and early adulthood, but can develop in infancy or in later adulthood.

What does Psoriasis look like? Psoriasis presents as a thick scaly buildup of the outer layer of the skin. The thick areas are called plaques. They usually occur on the scalp and pressure points such as the elbows, knees, hands, feet and lower back, but any part of the body – including the nails, genitals, and skin folds – can be affected. The skin under the plaques is often red.

Psoriasis is a chronic condition, which means you will have it indefinitely. Psoriasis can be limited to a few areas of the skin (mild) or it can be widespread (moderate to severe). It may be itchy.

What causes Psoriasis? The exact cause of psoriasis is unknown. Recent research points to an abnormality in special white blood cells (T cells) which trigger inflammation in the skin. This causes the skin to grow too rapidly, leading to thickening and the resulting scale.

It is impossible to predict who will get psoriasis. Research has shown that heredity plays a role; but environmental factors such as physical injury (cut, scratch, burn) to the skin, infections and stress can trigger psoriasis. Certain medications may also cause psoriasis to flare. Consumption of alcohol may make psoriasis worse. Often, psoriasis may be worse in the winter time.

Psoriasis is NOT contagious and therefore cannot be spread person-to-person.

How is Psoriasis treated? Psoriasis is considered a chronic, recurrent condition. There is no cure. However, there are many treatment options which may help to keep psoriasis under control and reduce symptoms.

For mild psoriasis, topical therapy is used. These are typically moisturizers, corticosteroids, tar-based preparations, keratolytics, retinoids and Dovonex, a vitamin D derived medication.

In more extensive involvement, your doctor may advise ultraviolet light therapy or use of systemic oral medications such as methotrexate, cyclosporine, acitretin or biologic injection therapies. Your doctor will review the potential benefits and risks involved in the use of these therapies.

For additional information about psoriasis and its treatment options, please check out the following website:

The National Psoriasis Foundation: www.psoriasis.org