

# Psoriasis

## Factors known to trigger psoriasis:

- Infection (strep throat)
- Puberty and menopause can worsen symptoms, pregnancy may offer relief
- Alcohol abuse
- Being overweight can complicate management

## Be Patient

Try not to get discouraged if progress is slow. With some persistence, you can gain the upper hand.

For more information or support:

The Canadian Association of Psoriasis Patients  
[www.canadianpsoriasis.ca](http://www.canadianpsoriasis.ca)

Psoriasis is a chronic inflammatory skin condition. It starts as small red bumps. As the affected area grows larger, plaques are formed. These plaques are covered with a silvery-white buildup of dead skin cells called scale. Psoriasis is commonly found on the trunk, arms, legs, palms, and soles. It often affects the scalp, but rarely the face.

## Causes

Normally, the outer layer of the skin, called epidermis, regenerates every 28 days or so. For patients with psoriasis, this process is accelerated and the skin regenerates every 4 to 5 days. Because dead skin cells cannot be shed fast enough, they pile up on the surface of the skin, forming scales. Genetics play a major role in the development of psoriasis. It affects men and women equally, and is more prevalent in Caucasians.

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## Symptoms

The silvery-white scales are quite distinctive. The skin underneath is pinkish-red, shiny, and usually has small areas of pinpoint bleeding. Psoriasis can alter the appearance of fingernails and toenails, causing the surface to become pitted, thick, or yellowish.

The severity of psoriasis is not necessarily reflective of the amount of itching felt. Avoid scratching!

## Treatment

Psoriasis cannot be cured but can be treated adequately with medication. Its course and progress is unpredictable. Most go through periods of remission and flare-ups, while others have a more severe form of the disease that requires more aggressive therapy.

Prescription medications including creams, ointments and lotions are used to treat psoriasis. In severe cases, a combination of oral medication and ultraviolet light therapy may be prescribed, as well as immunosuppressants or vitamin A derivatives.



## TRUE or FALSE?

### Anxiety can cause psoriasis

False. Stress does not cause psoriasis. It can, however, worsen or prolong a flare-up.

### Poor diet can cause psoriasis

False. While some believe that high-fat diets or alcohol abuse can trigger a flare-up, diet has very little impact on psoriasis. We do know however, that certain medications trigger flare-ups.

### Sun exposure can clear psoriasis plaques

True. While sun exposure and dryness are beneficial, sunburn can worsen the problem. Hot and humid environments tend to make a bad case of psoriasis worse. Some actually notice that sun exposure makes their plaques develop faster.

### Psoriasis can cause arthritis or cancer

False. While some patients have rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis, the link between the two is not clearly understood.

### Psoriasis can cause hair loss

False. Hair may become more brittle, but the roots, which are deeper, are not affected. Once the scales disappear, hair is just as healthy as before.