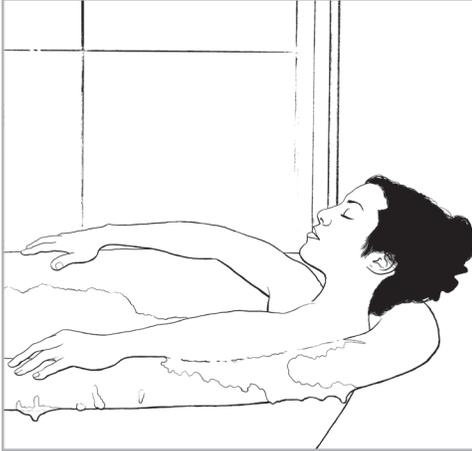


Psoriasis



Psoriasis is a skin condition that makes your skin inflamed, dry and scaly. It's caused by skin cells that grow too quickly and build up on the surface of your skin.

Normally, your skin cells start growing deep in your skin and work their way to your skin's surface slowly. Then, new skin cells replace old skin cells that have died. But if you have psoriasis, your immune system tells your body to grow new skin cells too fast and old skin cells don't die quickly enough. This causes thick, reddish patches of skin that can itch and feel sore.

Psoriasis is a chronic condition, which means you'll always have it, but your symptoms may come and go. With treatment and lifestyle changes, psoriasis doesn't have to interrupt your life or keep you from doing the things you enjoy.

Symptoms

Symptoms usually start between ages 15 and 35. Psoriasis can affect your elbows, knees, scalp, lower back, face, hands, nails and soles of your feet. Symptoms vary from person to person, but you'll probably have these common symptoms:

- **red patches of raised skin with silvery scales**
- **dry, cracked skin** (that may bleed)
- **skin that itches, burns or is sore**
- **thick or ridged nails**

In severe cases, you might also have blisters full of pus on top of the red patches of skin.

Flare-ups of psoriasis symptoms usually happen in cycles. You may have symptoms for a while and then they go away, until they flare up again. Psoriasis flare-ups are usually triggered by:

- **infections**
- **stress**
- **changes in the weather**
- **certain medicines**
- **alcohol**
- **smoking**

Treating Psoriasis

The main goals of treatment are: to stop your immune system's reaction that causes new skin growth, and to smooth your skin by getting rid of raised patches of dry skin. The most common treatments are:

Topical treatments—Creams and ointments can help treat mild to moderate psoriasis. Lotions with corticosteroids suppress your immune system and help reduce inflammation and itching. Lotions with retinoids can help reduce inflammation. Moisturizing lotions can help soothe skin and heal dry, rough patches.

Oral medicines—These work by interfering with how your body makes new skin cells. They can also help with inflammation.

Always take your medicine as prescribed. Don't stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor first, even if your symptoms go away or you have side effects. Your doctor will work with you to find a medicine, or combination of medicines, that works for you.

If medicines don't work to treat psoriasis, your doctor may suggest other options like light therapy.



Get more tips for easing psoriasis at home and more at **HealthyAdvice.com/TreatPsoriasis**

You can also visit these websites:

- **American Academy of Dermatology**
www.skincarephysicians.com
- **National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases**
www.niams.nih.gov

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What You Can Do

Try these tips to help manage your psoriasis:

- **Avoid triggers.** Track what causes your flare-ups and then take steps to avoid them.
- **Get enough sleep and eat well.** The healthier you are, the easier it will be for your body to fight infections. Fill your diet with fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Also, getting enough rest can help prevent stress and fatigue. Aim for eight hours of sleep a night.
- **Reduce stress.** Exercise, meditate, journal, join a support group or practice deep breathing techniques.
- **Quit smoking.** Smoking can trigger psoriasis flare-ups. If you're trying to quit, talk to your doctor before you use nicotine patches because they can also trigger flare-ups. For help quitting, visit www.smokefree.gov.
- **Limit alcohol.** Alcohol can trigger flare-ups and also interfere with some psoriasis medicines.
- **Use cold compresses to help with inflammation and itching.**
- **Moisturize your skin.** Using a heavy moisturizer can relieve dry skin and help prevent cracking. Moisturize in the morning after you bathe to help trap moisture in your skin, and then again at night before bed.
- **Take warm baths each day.** Add oils and Epsom salts, and use mild soaps to help relieve dry skin and get rid of scaly skin.
- **Use sunscreen.** Sunburns can trigger flare-ups.
- **Don't pick, rub or scratch your skin.** This can put you at risk for infections and make your skin bleed. It can also make your psoriasis worse.
- **Wear fabrics like cotton that are gentle on your skin.**

Remember:

- Psoriasis is chronic, but you can treat flare-ups and take steps to prevent them.
- Always take your psoriasis medicine as prescribed, and don't stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor first, even if your symptoms go away.
- Pay attention to what triggers psoriasis flare-ups so you can take steps to avoid them.