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## Psoriasis

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### Summary

- Psoriasis is an inflammatory condition of the skin, the nails and the joints.
  - Psoriasis is not contagious.
  - While there is no known cure for psoriasis, it can be controlled with treatment.
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Psoriasis is an inflammatory skin condition. It is not contagious. Symptoms include red scaly patches on skin, itchiness and flaking of the skin. The areas most commonly affected are the scalp, elbows and knees, but psoriasis can occur anywhere on the body. There is no cure for psoriasis, but it can be completely controlled with treatment.

### Symptoms of psoriasis

Symptoms of psoriasis vary from person to person. The effects may include:

- red scaly patches on scalp, elbows, knees and other parts of the body
- itchiness – however, many people do not feel itchy at all
- shedding of scales of skin.

### Types of psoriasis

- plaque psoriasis – the most common form
- pustular psoriasis – a more severe form, which can be painful
- guttate psoriasis – found mostly in children
- napkin psoriasis – characteristically seen in infants between two and eight months of age
- flexural psoriasis – affects body folds and genital areas
- erythrodermic psoriasis – a severe form requiring hospitalisation.

### Psoriasis can cause arthritis

For an unknown reason, psoriasis can cause a form of arthritis known as psoriatic arthritis. Symptoms include:

- discomfort, throbbing or swelling in one or many joints
- tenderness in any joint
- pain caused by inflammation in the joints, which stimulates nerve endings.
- The joints most likely to be affected are the last joint in the fingers or toes, the sacrum (lower back), wrists, knees or ankles.

### Causes of psoriasis

A number of genes have been associated with different types of psoriasis. If psoriasis runs in your family, infections and certain medications (lithium, beta blockers, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications and antimalarial medication) can trigger the onset of psoriasis or cause it to flare up. Skin injury and smoking can also make certain types of psoriasis worse.

### Treatment of psoriasis

Doctors may prescribe a range of treatments for the relief of psoriasis symptoms including:

- coal tar preparations, cortisone and other prescription creams
  - medications such as methotrexate, acitretin, cyclosporin and calcipotriol
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- ultraviolet light therapy.

### **Biologic therapies for psoriasis**

**Biologic therapies** have revolutionised the treatment of psoriasis and greatly improved our understanding of how psoriasis works. As these treatments are expensive, the government only subsidises the cost for patients with severe cases of the disease and where all other treatment options have been exhausted.

### **Clinical trials for psoriasis**

Before a new treatment can be registered in Australia it must undergo extensive testing. **Clinical trials** are used to determine the safety and effectiveness of new treatments for psoriasis. The regulations governing clinical trials in Australia make the process as safe as possible for clinical trial participants.

People with psoriasis may consider volunteering to participate in a clinical trial. Participation provides volunteers with access to cutting edge treatments that are not otherwise available. General information about being part of a clinical trial can be found [here](#).

Internationally, [ClinicalTrials.gov](http://ClinicalTrials.gov) provides patients, their family members, and the public with easy and free access to information on clinical studies for a wide range of diseases and conditions. If you are interested in participating in a clinical trial, talk to your doctor.

### **Where to get help**

- Your doctor
- Specialist dermatologist
- **Psoriasis Australia** Inc. Tel. 0481 346 160

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