

Psoriasis Fact Sheet

What is Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a common chronic inflammatory skin condition that is characterized by raised red patches and flaky, silvery scales. About one million Canadians suffer from psoriasis and many that suffer from psoriasis on their body also have symptoms on the scalp.

Symptoms can be permanent or intermittent; a trigger (e.g. emotional stress, local injury to skin, systemic infection or the use of some medications) may cause a flare-up or even lead to the development of psoriasis.

Although the exact cause is not known, it is recognized that genetics and the immune system play key roles in psoriasis. People with psoriasis have skin cells that multiply very quickly (thirty days for normal skin cells vs. three to four days for psoriasis skin cells), causing psoriasis lesions to build up.

Causes and Triggers

The exact cause of psoriasis is not quite understood, but experts tend to agree that this disease begins with a malfunction of the immune system and resulting inflammation. What triggers psoriasis in one person is likely different from another person.

Psoriasis triggers may include stress, injuries to the skin (e.g. vaccinations, sunburns and scratches), certain medications (e.g. lithium, an antidepressant; quinidine for heart conditions), beta blockers (antihypertensive) and infections (e.g. earache, bronchitis, tonsillitis or a respiratory infection). The weather may affect psoriasis positively or negatively; the winter months often dry and irritate the skin, while the summer sun often helps psoriasis plaques fade.

Treating Psoriasis

What works best for one person with psoriasis may be different than another - working with a health care professional on a treatment plan based on the type and severity of the condition, what sufferers are willing to use such as OTC creams and gels like Dermakalm, and the response to a given treatment.

