



# Understanding Psoriasis



# Psoriasis is more than a skin condition

When you have psoriasis, patches of your skin can become raised, discolored, or flaky. Psoriasis starts inside the body, underneath the skin, when your immune system is overactive. This causes inflammation, which leads to your body making too much skin. The skin builds up on the surface and forms patches that range from red, pink, or silvery-white on lighter skin tones to violet, dark brown, or gray on darker skin tones. They often itch and can hurt or bleed when touched.



Plaque psoriasis is the most common type. **Ask your healthcare provider what type of psoriasis you have.**



## Common medical words you may hear:

*Psoriasis*

/sa-rye-uh-sis/

*Inflammation*

/in-fluh-may-shin/

*Plaques*

/placks/

**How does inflammation happen?** The body releases chemicals into our blood to protect us from infections, injuries, or stressful events. This causes more blood to flow and may result in redness, swelling, or pain. In psoriasis, the chemicals released cause your body to make too many skin cells too fast creating build-up and scales.

## How did I get it?

**Psoriasis is not contagious**, others will not catch it from you, and you did not catch it from someone else. The exact cause of psoriasis is not known. However, you may be at a higher risk if someone else in your family had it.

## You are not alone!

**Psoriasis can make some people feel embarrassed, shy, or afraid to get close to others.** If you feel this way, consider joining a psoriasis support group. Ask your healthcare provider to help you find a group in your area.

# What causes psoriasis to flare?

There may be times when your psoriasis symptoms get better and other times when they get worse. A flare is when psoriasis suddenly gets worse. “Triggers” are what cause your psoriasis to flare. **You may be able to identify some causes of flares, such as certain foods or stressful events.** Avoiding known triggers and making some lifestyle changes, such as changes in the food you eat and exercising regularly, may also help prevent flares.



## In addition to food, these other triggers may cause flares:



Injuries (cuts, scrapes, bug bites, or sunburn)



Dry air, like in winter



Infections, such as strep throat, flu, or common cold



Stress



Using or stopping certain medications

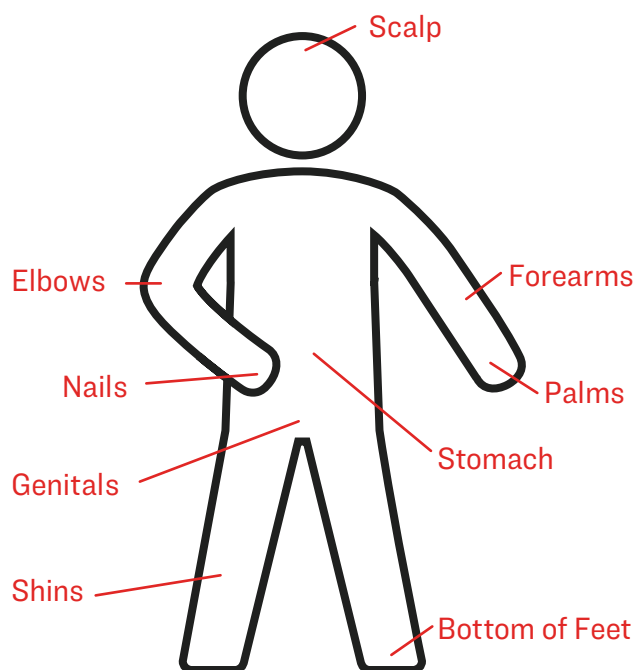


Smoking

# Some places psoriasis can appear

## Everyone is different

- Where the scaly patches appear
- How itchy and painful they can get
- How psoriasis affects your well-being



# What triggers your flares?

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check your triggers and share this form with your healthcare team.

- Injuries (cuts, scrapes, bug bites, or sunburn)
- Infections, such as strep throat, flu, or common cold
- Using or stopping certain medications
- Other
- Dry air, like in winter
- Stress
- Smoking
- Food

Write any other triggers or details of flares (part of body, activity, mood, etc.).

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# Where do you have patches?

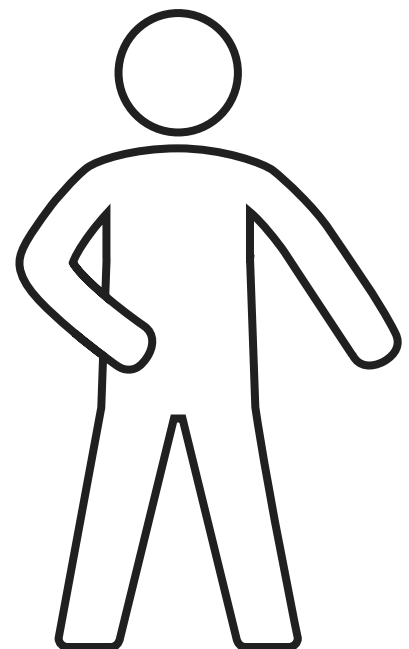
Circle the areas where you have seen patches of psoriasis on your body, even if they have disappeared. **Share this picture with your healthcare team.**

Write any additional notes:

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# Your treatment options

There is no cure, but there are many treatments that may give you relief. Your healthcare team can help you choose treatments based on:

- Where the psoriasis is located
- How much of your body is affected by psoriasis
- How much your condition bothers you personally

Find a healthcare provider that really understands psoriasis and how it affects your life. **Continue treatment even if your skin looks better. If you stop treatment, symptoms may come back.**



**Medicine on the skin (topical)**



**Artificial light or sunlight (light therapy)**



**Medicine through the whole body (systemic)**



**Medicine targeting specific cells (biologic)**



Different methods work for different people. If you are not happy with the results of your treatment, **ask your healthcare provider about alternative therapies.**



**Psoriasis can make you feel embarrassed, sad, or frustrated.** Tell your healthcare team how psoriasis impacts your daily life, your relationships, and your mood. This can help your team create a treatment plan that best suits your needs. Think about how your condition affects different parts of your life.

- Does it interfere with your daily activities?
- Do you feel self-conscious, embarrassed, or angry?
- Do you have trouble sleeping?
- Is it impacting other people in your life?



Check out this additional resource for more information about psoriasis:

**National Psoriasis Foundation**  
**psoriasis.org**