

In This Issue...

7 Questions (cont)

Wait times

World Psoriasis Day

Psoriasis: The 7 most commonly asked questions



Have you recently been diagnosed with psoriasis? You are not alone. This disease affects about one million Canadians with varying severity. One of the first steps to moving forward with your life is to understand the facts

about this disease and learn how you can achieve your goals for both your life and your psoriasis.

1. What is psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a chronic autoimmune disease of the skin characterized by patches of red and unusually scaly skin. Autoimmune diseases are diseases where the immune system makes inflammation against self-tissue and organs. The role of the immune system is to protect the body from infection and other assault. In the case of psoriasis, your immune system malfunctions, sending out messages telling your body to make new skin cells faster than you need them. The skin cells grow too quickly, without a normal time period to shed, and build up to form plaques. While a normal skin cell grows to maturity in 8 to 30 days and then sheds from the skin's surface, a psoriatic skin cell takes only three or four days to mature. Psoriasis can affect any part of the body, but it usually occurs on the scalp, elbows, knees, genitals and lower back, often in the same place on both sides of the body. It can also occur in fingernails or toenails.

2. What causes it?

The exact cause of psoriasis is not known, but research points to a disorder in the body's immune system. Genetics, the environment and your stress levels can all play a role in the psoriasis symptoms you experience.

3. What can trigger psoriasis?

Psoriasis is first and foremost an autoimmune disease

that seems to have some genetic elements—so there is nothing you can do or should have done to avoid getting it. However, there are some things that may trigger flare-ups, and knowing what they are may help you avoid them. Possible causes for flare-ups may include:

- Skin injury and irritation: Frequent rubbing and/or scratching of the skin can irritate psoriasis.
- Climate: While moderate sun exposure can be very helpful in relieving some symptoms, a hot humid environment or overexposure to the sun can make psoriasis worse. In contrast, the low-humidity conditions of winter can make skin overly dry, which can worsen your psoriasis.
- Diet: A healthy balanced diet is a good idea for everyone, and people with psoriasis are no exception. You may find that certain foods cause flare-ups.
- Stress: Stress and tension seem to make psoriasis worse, so do your best to avoid those situations and learn effective stress management techniques.
- Medications: Psoriasis may be worsened by some medications, such as some anti-inflammatory medications (used to treat rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis), and certain beta-blockers (used to treat high blood pressure). Tell your dermatologist about any medications—including natural remedies—you may be taking for other medical conditions.

4. Is there a cure for psoriasis?

At present, psoriasis cannot be cured; however; over the last 10 years, our understanding of psoriasis has increased exponentially, which has assisted in the development of therapies with high efficacy and safety.

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7 Questions (cont.)

5. *Is psoriasis contagious or hereditary?*

Psoriasis is an immunological disease; it is not contagious. With increased education and awareness, this important message is being achieved. Psoriasis is in large part hereditary; however, its inheritance is very complex, and it is difficult to predict with certainty whether one's offspring will be affected. Blood tests are not available.

6. *Should patients with psoriasis make lifestyle changes?*

As with any chronic condition, patients diagnosed with psoriasis should incorporate healthy living as part of their treatment plan. Eating well, exercising, reducing their stress and avoid consuming alcohol, as this can decrease the effectiveness of their treatment and could potentially be a trigger for psoriasis inflammation.

7. *What are the treatment options?*

Psoriasis treatment may involve topical treatments, oral drugs, injections, and light therapy. Dermatologists will choose a treatment option that best suit each patient's psoriasis severity, as well as the type of psoriasis. Topical

steroids can be effective for short-term use or when a psoriasis flare-up occurs. Light therapy, which involves regular short doses of light, can help improve psoriasis inflammation. One way to ensure light exposure year-round is through ultraviolet phototherapy administered at a dermatology office. Patients with moderate to severe psoriasis may need to explore a systemic therapy option, given orally or by injection. Finally, biologic agents and biosimilars are used for patients with psoriasis who have not responded to any other form of treatment or who cannot use traditional therapies. Biologics use a targeting approach to interrupt the underlying immune processes that cause psoriatic symptoms. Currently, there are more than 80 different biologics and biosimilars used in Canada. 11 are approved for the treatment of psoriasis. The best treatment? Do what you can to stay healthy, keep yourself informed, work with your medical team and consider connecting with other psoriasis patients.

By Dr. Charles Lynde

[Reprinted from Canadian Skin Magazine Fall/Winter 2015](#)

Wait Times

We are looking for patient data on how long you had to wait to see a dermatologist. The survey will take less than 5 minutes of your time and if you complete the survey you could win a \$50 gift card – 1 prize to be won per province and territory. [Check out our survey](#) and share your experiences getting access to a dermatologist. Survey closes soon so don't delay!

We need you!

Our partner organization, The Canadian Skin Patient Alliance, is preparing a patient submission for Cimzia a new medication for psoriasis that is seeking approval in Canada.

If you have experience with this medication, [please take few minutes to fill out this short survey](#) (available in English only) to help influence the review of this medication to treat psoriasis.

World Psoriasis Day 2018



World Psoriasis Day is October 29th. The aim of this day is to raise awareness about the effect that psoriasis has on people's lives, educate and dispel common myths, as well as empowering patients to speak out about their condition, and give the psoriasis community a voice. The theme for this year's World Psoriasis Day is *Treat Psoriasis Seriously*. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter and use the hashtag #PsoSerious, and keep an eye on our website. In conjunction with WPD2018 we have launched the #PsoSerious website, giving patients and their families a voice – visit www.psoserious.ca to share your story, email your local politician, and check out the latest news on the access to care and treatment in Canada for psoriasis patients.



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