

Psoriasis

Psoriasis is a common skin problem that causes thickened, scaly areas or lesions.

What is psoriasis?

Psoriasis is one of the most common skin problems. It affects at least 1 in 50 people. Many people with psoriasis first develop it during childhood. It looks like scaly areas on the skin that are red or a darker shade of your skin color. Psoriasis can last for a long time (chronic problem). That means it usually does not go away completely, but it may come and go.

What causes psoriasis?

We do not know what causes psoriasis. It tends to run in families. Not everyone who has it has a family member with psoriasis. It is less common in children than it is in adults, but some people with psoriasis can develop joint pain and swelling (arthritis).

Sometimes, the thick or scaly lesions appear where skin has been rubbed, cut or damaged. That might be a reason why lesions often happen on areas like the elbows, knees, buttocks and scalp. Very small lesions of psoriasis (guttate psoriasis) can happen after a strep throat infection, and these show up all over the body.

How do you treat psoriasis?

There are many treatments for psoriasis. First, we may recommend steroid creams, ointments or solutions for the skin. These go onto the thick or scaly areas of the skin 1 or 2 times each day as needed. Calcipotriene (Dovonex) cream or calcitrol (Vectical) ointment are medicines that treat psoriasis.

If your child has more serious psoriasis (large lesions or many lesions), their provider might recommend other kinds of treatments like ultraviolet light treatments (phototherapy). In a few cases, providers treat psoriasis with oral medication or injections.

Use medicines only if recommend by your healthcare provider. Check with your healthcare provider first before giving any type of medicine to your child. Providers must see children treated for psoriasis regularly. You can prevent problems by:

- Having your child avoid injury to the skin. Wear protective guards when taking part in sports that can harm the skin.
- Avoid tight clothing and shoes.
- Avoid sunburns, since these can damage the skin and may cause new lesions. Small amounts of sunlight may be helpful.

Where can I learn more about psoriasis?

National Psoriasis Foundation:
psoriasis.org

American Academy of Family Physicians:
familydoctor.org/condition/psoriasis

To Learn More

- Dermatology Clinic
206-987-2158
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201. This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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