

# Psoriasis

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

## What is psoriasis?

Psoriasis is one of the most common skin problems. It affects at least 1 in 50 people. It looks like red, scaly areas on the skin. Many people with psoriasis first develop it during childhood. Psoriasis is a 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. But 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 red 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.

## To Learn More

- Dermatology Clinic  
206-987-2158
- Your child’s healthcare provider
- [www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

## Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child’s 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.

## How do you treat psoriasis?

There are many treatments for psoriasis. First, your child’s provider will probably recommend steroid creams, ointments or solutions for the skin. These go onto the red, scaly areas of the skin 1 or 2 times each day as needed. Calcipotriene (Dovonex) cream or calcitrol (Vectical) ointment are other medicines to treat psoriasis.

If your child has more serious psoriasis (bad lesions or many lesions), their provider might recommend other kinds of treatments. Sometimes, children with psoriasis need ultraviolet light treatments (phototherapy). In a few cases, providers treat psoriasis with medicines that are taken by mouth (oral) or injections that affect the whole body.

Always follow the directions that your child’s provider gives for treatments. If your child is being treated for psoriasis, their provider must see them regularly. 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.

## Resources

National Psoriasis Foundation: [www.psoriasis.org](http://www.psoriasis.org).

American Academy of Family Physicians: [www.familydoctor.org](http://www.familydoctor.org). Search for “psoriasis.”