

What Can Be Done for Psoriasis

What is psoriasis?

Psoriasis (pronounced *sor-eye-a-sus*) is a condition that affects your skin and causes thick red marks that look like scales. The thick scaling is probably due to an increase in the number of skin cells. Sometimes pus-filled blisters occur. Most of the time, the skin on the elbows and knees is involved, but psoriasis can occur anywhere on the body, including the scalp, nails and mouth and even the skin overlying the joints.

Doctors aren't sure what causes psoriasis. It seems to get worse in many people during times of stress or if they have an infection.

How is psoriasis treated?

There are various types of treatment for psoriasis. Ointments are usually helpful, except during the summer, when your skin may get very warm and sweaty and cause the ointment to rub off. Ointments can be messy and unattractive. Creams aren't as thick as ointments and can be rubbed into the skin so that they don't show. Solutions are clear liquids that are especially useful for the scalp.

How often should I apply the medicine?

You should apply the medicine at least two times a day. Since the medicine is absorbed better through damp skin, putting it on after a shower or a bath is helpful. If you have psoriasis on your scalp, the medicine should be applied after shampooing. Remember to rub the solution into your scalp—don't just put it on your hair.

Lotion can be used on your skin as often as you like. Body lotion will help to keep the moisture in your skin and remove the scales. Before you go to bed, you can put your ointment or cream on the areas of psoriasis. Then, cover the area with plastic wrap, such as Saran Wrap.

Will psoriasis go away with treatment?

The scales of psoriasis should improve almost immediately after you begin treatment. It may take about two to six weeks for the affected areas of your skin to return to a more normal thickness, but the redness may last several months. While psoriasis will improve, it may not completely go away. Sometimes, the scaly spots get better or worse at the same time.

After you've been using a certain type of medicine, your psoriasis may "get used" to the treatment, and treatment may not be as effective as

it once was. If this happens, your doctor may change your medicine. Sometimes you may need a stronger dose of medicine. Talk to your doctor if you think your psoriasis doesn't seem to be getting better.

Are there other things I can do to make my psoriasis better?

Sunlight is good for psoriasis, but be careful not to stay in the sun too long or you'll get a sunburn. Wear sunscreen on the parts of your skin that aren't affected by psoriasis.



To get more information about psoriasis, you may write to the National Psoriasis Foundation, 6600 S.W. 92nd Avenue, #300, Portland, OR 97223. You may also call the foundation: 503-297-1545.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



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