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PSORIASIS

Psoriasis is a chronic autoimmune disease that appears on the skin. It occurs when the immune system sends out faulty signals that speed up the growth cycle of skin cells. Psoriasis is not contagious.

There are five types of psoriasis: plaque, guttate, inverse, pustular, and erythrodermic. The most common form, plaque psoriasis, appears as raised, red patches or lesions covered with a silvery white buildup of dead skin cells, called scale. Psoriasis can occur on any part of the body and is associated with other serious health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease and depression.

According to the National Institutes of Health, as many as 7.5 million Americans have psoriasis.

Psoriasis is not contagious—no one can “catch” it from another person. Because of their genes, certain people are more likely to develop it, but a “trigger” is usually necessary to make psoriasis appear. These triggers may include emotional stress, injury to the skin, some types of infection and reaction to certain drugs.

At this time, there is no cure for psoriasis; however, many treatment options are available to manage the condition successfully. Regular follow-up is important to find the treatment plan that works best for you and your lifestyle.

Having psoriasis puts you at an increased risk of developing one or more of the following medical conditions: obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol, depression and psoriatic arthritis.

Psoriasis can lead to increased alcohol and tobacco consumption, which further increases your risks for the above conditions.

Loss of excess weight, healthy diet and regular exercise along with a tobacco free lifestyle is important in preventing such medical problems. Avoid overconsumption of alcohol (greater than 1 glass per night).

Please contact your doctor if you experience any pain or swelling in one or more joints, as this may indicate the development of psoriatic arthritis, a condition not uncommonly associated with psoriasis. Early detection and treatment can prevent permanent damage to joints.

It is important for you to be monitored regularly by your primary care physician. Call your primary care provider immediately to inform them of your diagnosis, share your dermatologist’s concerns, and schedule a complete physical examination.

You can get more information and support from the National Psoriasis Foundation at www.posoriasis.org/home.

If you have any questions, please ask your doctor or call the office at (413) 733-9600.