

Your guide to

Psoriatic disease



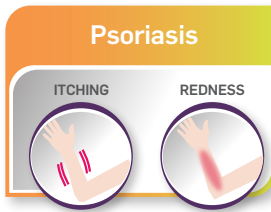
An overview of psoriatic disease

Psoriatic disease can affect different areas of the body, including the skin, nails, palms and soles, the scalp and the skeletal system (including the spine and joints).



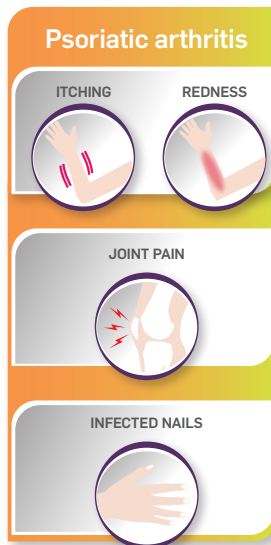
What is psoriatic disease?

Psoriasis can affect more than just the skin. Psoriatic disease is a collective term for multiple manifestations of psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis which can affect the skin (including scalp and nails), joints and spine. It is an autoimmune condition, where the immune system is overactive and targets the body's own healthy tissue as if it is fighting a foreign infection. The body's response to the attack is inflammation or swelling.



Psoriasis

A common condition that causes the skin to become inflamed, with the appearance of thickened, reddened skin with flaky, silver-white scaly plaques that can crack and bleed and can appear on any part of the body, including the scalp, hands and feet. The condition can also cause discoloured and thickened fingernails or toenails, or nails that separate from the nail bed.



Psoriatic arthritis

Psoriatic arthritis is an inflammatory disease of the joints associated with psoriasis.

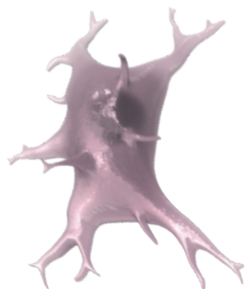
Even though it's called 'arthritis', joint pain isn't the only thing to look out for. Signs and symptoms of psoriatic arthritis include:

- Pain in joints such as the ankles, knees or elbows
- Inflamed, tender or stiff joints
- Back pain near the spine
- Morning stiffness
- Sausage-like inflammation of whole fingers and toes
- Pitted, crumbling or infected nails
- Inflamed, thickened skin.

Psoriatic arthritis may lead to permanent damage of joints if left untreated.

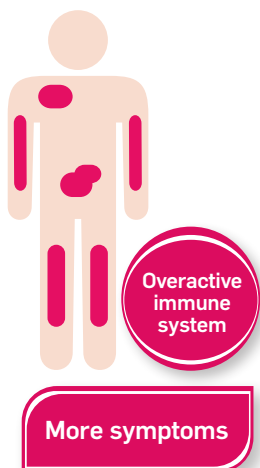
What causes psoriatic disease?

Although the cause is not known, we do know that psoriatic disease is an autoimmune disease, which means the immune system isn't working properly.



An overactive immune system

Our immune systems normally help to keep us healthy by fighting harmful things like bacteria and viruses. But in autoimmune diseases, the immune system mistakenly attacks the body's own healthy tissues and triggers an increase in inflammation.

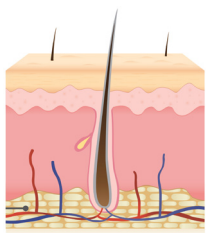


An overactive immune system means more inflammation.

More inflammation results in more severe symptoms.

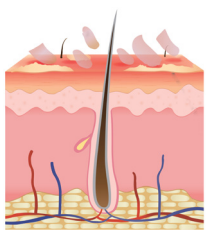
For people with psoriatic disease, an overactive immune system produces symptoms that affect the skin.

Approximately 30–40% of people with psoriatic disease also have symptoms in the joints.



Normal skin

Normally, skin cells move from the deeper layers of the skin towards the surface, where they're shed. This process usually takes 3 to 4 weeks.



Skin affected by psoriatic disease

In people with psoriatic disease, the immune system is overactive, which speeds the process up, so it only takes 3 to 4 days.

Skin cells build up on the surface of the skin before they can be shed, forming plaques. The affected area also becomes inflamed.

Other things that may be involved in psoriatic disease



Genes are thought to play a role in psoriatic disease because the condition is more likely if you have a history of it in your family.



An outside event – such as stress, an injury, or infection – often acts as a trigger for psoriatic disease.



Psoriatic disease is not contagious – you cannot catch it from other people, and other people cannot catch it from you.

What are the signs and symptoms of psoriatic disease?

You have an important role to play in managing your condition. Learn more about psoriatic disease, listen to your body and don't be afraid to seek advice. Be aware of your symptoms to improve conversations with your doctor and to ensure that together you choose the treatment that is right for you.

Answer the following questions to check for symptoms of psoriatic disease:

Have you ever had a swollen joint (or joints)?

☐

YES

☐

NO

Has a doctor ever told you that you have arthritis?

☐

YES

☐

NO

Do your fingernails or toenails have holes or pits?

☐

YES

☐

NO

Have you had pain in your heels?

☐

YES

☐

NO

Have you had a finger or toe that was completely swollen and painful for no apparent reason?

☐

YES

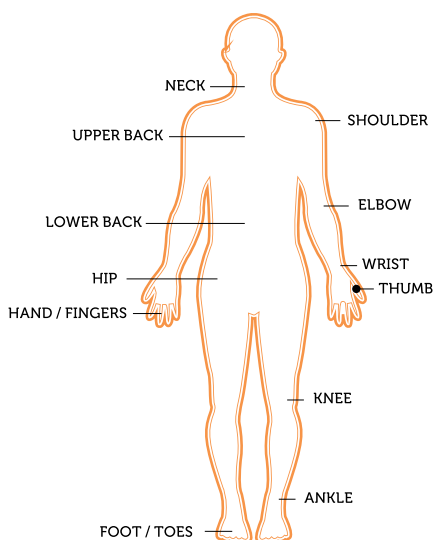
☐

NO

It's important to remember that not everyone will experience all of these symptoms.

The diagram opposite can be used to indicate where your body feels tender or sore.

Use the handy symptom tracker diagrams on pages 11-19 to track your symptoms over time and take this information to your doctor to work together on a plan to care for your psoriatic disease.



How does psoriatic disease progress over time?

Psoriatic disease can be unpredictable. There may be times when your symptoms are worse (flare-ups) and other times when the symptoms almost disappear. For some people, the symptoms may slowly worsen over time.

Remember: Treatment can help reduce the signs and symptoms of psoriasis.



Help is available

Living with a long-term health condition like psoriatic disease can affect you in many ways, including physical symptoms and the emotional impact of having plaques that are visible to others.

For more information about support that's available, visit an online support community
<https://www.psoriasis.org/>

What treatments can help with psoriatic disease?

There are a number of treatments that can help manage psoriatic disease. Everyone is different, so your doctor will work closely with you to develop a tailored treatment plan that's best for you.

In general, the aims of treatment are to:

- reduce redness and scaling to achieve clear or almost clear skin
- minimise the impact of the condition on your day-to-day life.

A healthy lifestyle



Stress can be a trigger for psoriatic disease, so learning to recognise and manage stress when it occurs is important.

Techniques such as deep breathing, yoga, and meditation can be helpful.



Smoking can trigger and aggravate psoriatic disease.

If you smoke, talk to your doctor or call Quitline (13 78 48) to discuss ways to quit that may work for you.



Eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly help lower the risk of developing other health conditions like cardiovascular disease and diabetes, which have been linked to psoriatic disease.



Topical treatments

Topical treatments – such as creams and lotions – are applied directly to the skin. They are the most common form of treatment for mild psoriasis or psoriasis that has been recently diagnosed.



Phototherapy

Phototherapy involves exposing the skin to ultraviolet (UV) light, under medical supervision.

Sometimes, tablets that make the skin more sensitive to UV light are prescribed in combination with phototherapy.



Oral treatments

Tablets and liquids that work throughout the whole body are called systemic treatments and are normally used for moderate to severe psoriatic disease.

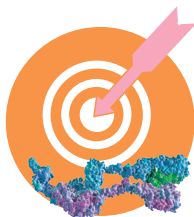
Methotrexate and cyclosporine A are examples of systemic treatments.

Biologic therapies

Biologic therapies are medications that are used to treat psoriatic disease that has not adequately responded to treatment with other medications.



They work by targeting specific substances in the body that cause the symptoms of psoriatic disease.



There are a number of different biologic therapies available for the treatment of psoriatic disease, which target different substances causing the inflammation in the skin and possibly joints.



Biologic therapies are normally administered as an injection, or as an infusion into a vein.



Regular blood tests are usually required during treatment to make sure biologic therapy is working and to check for any unwanted side effects.

Notes





Symptom tracker

Psoriatic disease

Keep track of your symptoms and monitor your progress



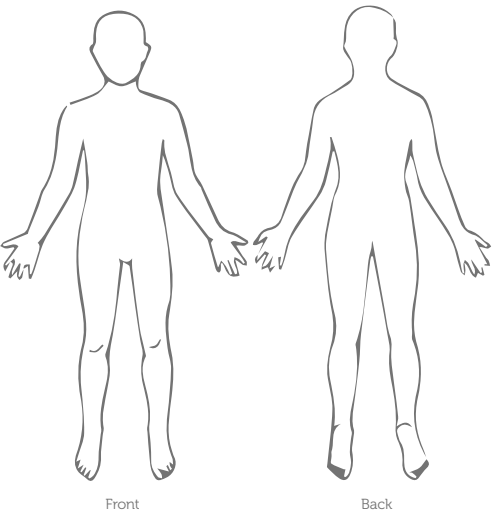
This tracker allows you to keep track of your symptoms and monitor your progress over the next 9 months. Tracking how your symptoms change over time – and their impact on your moods, social life, and ability to work – can help you and your healthcare team check that you’re getting the most out of treatment.

► START OF TREATMENT

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

**Mark on the diagram where you have symptoms
and what they are**

(e.g. psoriasis rash/plaque, itch, scaling, pain)











Notes & questions









Write down any notes, questions or concerns to discuss with your doctor

(e.g. what helped with your symptoms, or what made things worse)

Rate your current symptoms

Circle the face that best reflects your current symptoms.

	VERY SEVERE	NONE
Rash (plaque) My psoriasis rash (plaque) today is:		
Scaling My amount of scaly skin today is:		
Itch My psoriasis itch today is:		
Pain My psoriasis pain today is:		

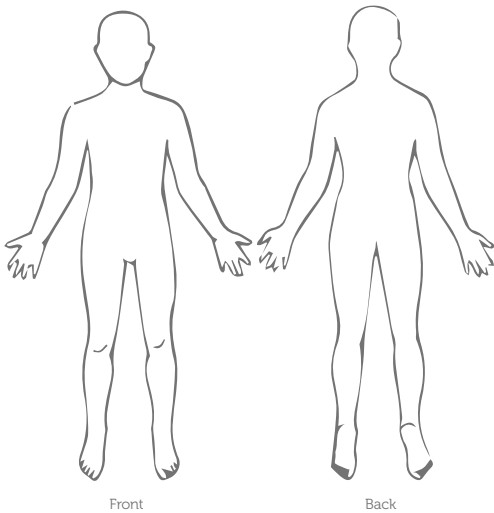
	VERY POOR	VERY GOOD
Mood My mood today is:		
Sleep quality My sleep quality last night was:		
Social activity/relationships My ability to engage in social activities and relationships with friends and family is:		
Work life/daily activities My ability to work or carry out my daily activities today is:		

► AFTER 3 MONTHS

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

**Mark on the diagram where you have symptoms
and what they are**

(e.g. psoriasis rash/plaque, itch, scaling, pain)



Notes & questions









Write down any notes, questions or concerns to discuss with your doctor.









For example – what helped with your symptoms, or made things worse?

What improvements have you noticed? Are there activities you can now do that you couldn't before?

Rate your current symptoms

Circle the face that best reflects your current symptoms.

	VERY SEVERE	NONE
Rash (plaque) My psoriasis rash (plaque) today is:		
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Itch My psoriasis itch today is:		
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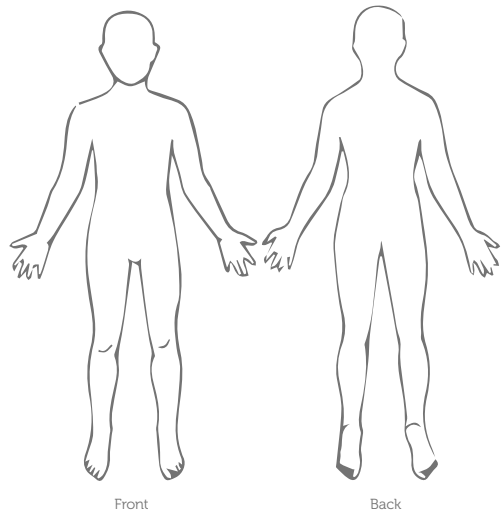
	VERY POOR	VERY GOOD
Mood My mood today is:		
Sleep quality My sleep quality last night was:		
Social activity/relationships My ability to engage in social activities and relationships with friends and family is:		
Work life/daily activities My ability to work or carry out my daily activities today is:		

► AFTER 6 MONTHS

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

**Mark on the diagram where you have symptoms
and what they are**

(e.g. psoriasis rash/plaque, itch, scaling, pain)



Notes & questions









Write down any notes, questions or concerns to discuss with your doctor.









For example – what helped with your symptoms, or made things worse?

What improvements have you noticed? Are there activities you can now do that you couldn't before?

Rate your current symptoms

Circle the face that best reflects your current symptoms.

	VERY SEVERE	NONE
Rash (plaque) My psoriasis rash (plaque) today is:		
Scaling My amount of scaly skin today is:		
Itch My psoriasis itch today is:		
Pain My psoriasis pain today is:		

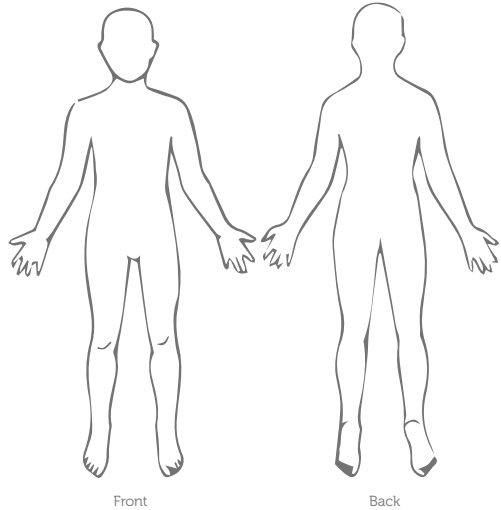
	VERY POOR	VERY GOOD
Mood My mood today is:		
Sleep quality My sleep quality last night was:		
Social activity/relationships My ability to engage in social activities and relationships with friends and family is:		
Work life/daily activities My ability to work or carry out my daily activities today is:		

► AFTER 9 MONTHS

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Mark on the diagram where you have symptoms and what they are

(e.g. psoriasis rash/plaque, itch, scaling, pain)



Notes & questions









Write down any notes, questions or concerns to discuss with your doctor.









For example – what helped with your symptoms, or made things worse?

What improvements have you noticed? Are there activities you can now do that you couldn't before?

Rate your current symptoms

Circle the face that best reflects your current symptoms.

	VERY SEVERE	NONE
Rash (plaque) My psoriasis rash (plaque) today is:		
Scaling My amount of scaly skin today is:		
Itch My psoriasis itch today is:		
Pain My psoriasis pain today is:		

	VERY POOR	VERY GOOD
Mood My mood today is:		
Sleep quality My sleep quality last night was:		
Social activity/relationships My ability to engage in social activities and relationships with friends and family is:		
Work life/daily activities My ability to work or carry out my daily activities today is:		

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Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

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Arthritis Australia/Australian Rheumatology Association. Psoriatic arthritis information sheet. Available at: https://www.arthritisaustralia.com.au/images/stories/documents/info_sheets/2015/Condition%20specific/Psoriaticarthritis.pdf. Accessed July 2019.

National Psoriasis Foundation. The immune system and psoriatic disease. Available at: <https://www.psoriasis.org/research/science-of-psoriasis/immune-system>. Accessed July 2019.

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