Psoriasis is a skin disease recognized by itchy sore red patches that can be not only painful but also embarrassing. Psoriasis affects more than 3% of the U.S. population.

Psoriasis usually appears as patches on your elbows, knees, scalp, back, face, palms and feet, but they can show up on other parts of your body too, including fingernails, toenails, genitals and inside the mouth.

Besides being uncomfortable, these patches of skin can make you self-conscious about the way you look.

Psoriasis can affect more than just the skin. It causes some people to have swollen joints and arthritis. Psoriasis sufferers may be at higher risk for diabetes, obesity, abnormal cholesterol, strokes and heart attacks.

Psoriasis can last a long time, even a lifetime. Symptoms come and go. Things that make them worse include
- Infections
- Stress
- Dry skin
- Certain medicines

**Treating Psoriasis**

Doctors often use a trial-and-error approach to find a psoriasis treatment that works. These include:

- **Topical Treatments.** Ointments or creams applied directly to the skin.

- **Light Therapy.** Doctors may decide on Light Therapy. Both natural light from the sun and artificial ultraviolet light can reduce symptoms and your doctor may try either or both.

- **Systemic Treatment.** Doctors may prescribe systemic treatment—medicines taken orally by pill or injection.

- **Combination Therapy.** Combining different treatments can prove more effective.

- **Psychological Support.** People with moderate to severe psoriasis may benefit from counseling or a support group.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

In many cases, there is a family history of psoriasis. Studies show that a large number of families affected by psoriasis have genes linked to the disease.

Health Content compiled from National Institute of Health websites and the CDC.