

Understanding Psoriasis:

Psoriasis has long been a disease covered in misunderstanding. If you or someone you know has psoriasis, it's important to know the facts. Knowledge gives you the power to better cope with the [impact of psoriasis](#) , [take action](#) and [learn more about new treatment](#) options that can help.

What is psoriasis? ^{2,3,4}

Psoriasis is a chronic immune system disorder that causes raised, red patches (also called lesions or plaques) with silvery white buildup of dead cells (called scale) to form on the skin. These lesions may be itchy and painful.

The immune system is mistakenly activated, which causes the body to produce new skin cells much more quickly than normal. A normal skin cell matures and falls off in 28 to 30 days. But a psoriatic skin cell takes only three to four days to mature and move to the surface. Instead of falling off (shedding), the cells pile up and form lesions.

Psoriasis most commonly appears on the scalp, knees, elbows and torso. But psoriasis can develop anywhere, including the nails, palms, soles, genitals and, rarely, the face. Often, lesions appear in the same place on the right and left sides of the body.

Is all psoriasis alike? ⁵

There are many forms of psoriasis: among diagnosed patients, about 80 percent of those diagnosed with psoriasis have plaque psoriasis, making it the most common form of the disease. Other types include:

- Guttate [GUH-tate], characterised by small dot-like lesions
- Pustular, characterised by weeping lesions and intense scaling
- Inverse, subject to irritation from rubbing and sweating because of its location in skin folds and tender areas.
- Erythrodermic [eh-REETH-ro-der-mik], characterised by intense shedding and redness of the skin

Who gets psoriasis? ^{4,6,7,8}

If you have psoriasis, you're not alone. Psoriasis affects an estimated 100,000 people in Ireland.

The disease occurs nearly equally in men and women, and across all socioeconomic groups. There may be a hereditary link —research has shown that when one parent is affected by the disease, there is a 10 percent chance that their offspring will develop psoriasis.

Psoriasis can occur in people of all ages, but typically appears between the ages of 15 and 35.

What causes psoriasis? ³

No one knows exactly what causes psoriasis. There are several known triggers that can cause psoriasis to flare up for the

first time or aggravate existing psoriasis. These include emotional stress, injury to the skin, some types of infection and reactions to certain drugs.