

Children with Psoriasis: THE FACTS

Psoriasis is a serious disease.

A recent study in the British Journal of Dermatology found that children with psoriasis report impairment in their quality of life that equals the impairment reported by children with illnesses such as epilepsy, diabetes and asthma.

Psoriasis is not contagious.

Psoriasis is a disease triggered by faulty signals in the immune system that cause skin cells to replicate too quickly. That skin becomes red and inflamed, and flakes of skin can peel off frequently.

- >> Psoriasis can run in families, as certain genes have been linked to psoriasis.
- >> There is not currently a cure for psoriasis. It tends to go through cycles of worsening and improvement.
- >> As many as 7.5 million Americans have psoriasis, including hundreds of thousands of children. While there are many mild cases of psoriasis, there are also many severe cases, even in children.

Psoriasis can cause physical pain, including from skin that can crack, bleed and itch.

- >> This can make gym class, recess and dance class painful in some cases.
- >> The itch and/or pain can be distracting, making it harder to concentrate.
- >> It often hurts more in cold weather. Sunlight typically helps, but sunburn is bad.
- >> Psoriatic arthritis is not common in children but does occur. Visit our website for resources and information on psoriatic arthritis in children.

For many children, psoriasis also causes significant emotional pain.

They may face teasing or bullying for looking different, they may feel anxiety over trying to keep their psoriasis hidden (or not being able to keep it hidden), and they may have daily pain or itching.

Research...Access to Treatments...Cure

- >> A child coping with psoriasis may experience anger, frustration, embarrassment, shame, sadness, and self-esteem issues.
- >> If they are trying to keep their psoriasis hidden, the locker room, gym class or swimming may cause them particular stress.
- >> Some children with psoriasis, fortunately, do not experience these feelings, making a case-by-case assessment essential. Each child reacts differently to his or her psoriasis, and that reaction can change over time.

What you can do for a child with psoriasis:

- >> Educate yourself and, if appropriate, the child's classmates and other teachers about psoriasis.
- >> Be attuned to both the physical and emotional challenges psoriasis can cause, and how it can affect a child's performance inside and outside the classroom.
- >> Encourage the child to communicate his or her feelings about psoriasis to both teachers and parents, so appropriate action can be taken.
- >> Understand that some adults expose their psoriasis to the public, while others try to keep it hidden. Children are no different, and the child's decision in this regard should be respected.
- >> Note that children with psoriasis should particularly avoid strep infections and sun burn, which can cause psoriasis to worsen.
- >> Encourage optimism in the child. New treatments continue to be developed for psoriasis, and the future is bright. Ben Franklin had psoriasis, and that never stopped him....

Please visit www.PsoriasisKids.org for more information on children with psoriasis, including an interview with a leading pediatric dermatologist about psoriasis in children. You can also email us with your questions or concerns at psoriasiskids@psorcurennow.org .