

## Patient Information Leaflet: Chronic Plaque Psoriasis

### What is Chronic Plaque Psoriasis?

Chronic plaque psoriasis is a common, long-lasting autoimmune skin condition characterised by the development of raised, well defined red patches covered with thick, silvery-white scales (plaques). It often affects the scalp, elbows, knees, and lower back, but it can appear anywhere on the body. Psoriasis occurs when the immune system mistakenly accelerates skin cell production, leading to the accumulation of cells on the skin's surface. There are two peaks of onset, a younger peak in the 20-30s and an older peak in the 50-60s

### Causes:

The exact cause of chronic plaque psoriasis is not fully understood, but several factors may contribute to its development:

- **Genetics:** A family history of psoriasis increases the likelihood of developing the condition.
- **Immune System:** An overactive immune response leads to inflammation and rapid skin cell turnover.
- **Environmental Triggers:** Factors such as stress, infections (especially streptococcal infections), skin injuries, smoking, and heavy alcohol consumption can trigger or exacerbate psoriasis.

### Symptoms:

Signs and symptoms of chronic plaque psoriasis may include:

- Red patches of skin covered with thick, silvery scales.
- Dry, cracked skin that may bleed.
- Itching, burning, or soreness.
- Thickened or ridged nails.
- Swollen and stiff joints (in cases associated with psoriatic arthritis).


### Diagnosis:

Chronic plaque psoriasis is typically diagnosed by a dermatologist based on a physical examination of the skin, scalp and nails. A skin biopsy may be performed in some cases to rule out other conditions.

### Management and Treatment Options:

While there is no cure for chronic plaque psoriasis, several treatment options are available to control symptoms and manage flare-ups.

#### 1. Topical Treatments:

- **Corticosteroids:** Anti-inflammatory creams or ointments used to reduce redness and scaling during flare-ups.
  - **Vitamin D Analogues:** Such as calcipotriol help slow skin cell growth and improve scaling.
  - **Combination of potent corticosteroids and Vitamin D Analogues or Salicylic acid:** these are often more convenient and more effective than using creams with one ingredient only.
  - **Retinoids:** Topical retinoids can help reduce inflammation and promote skin cell turnover.
  - **Coal Tar:** A traditional treatment that helps reduce scaling and itching.
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## 2. Phototherapy:

- **UVB Therapy:** Exposure to narrow band ultraviolet B light (308nm) under medical supervision to slow skin cell turnover and reduce plaques.
- **PVA Therapy:** Combines a drug (psoralen) with UVA light to enhance the treatment's effectiveness.

## 3. Systemic Treatments:

- **Oral Medications:** Such as methotrexate, ciclosporin, acitretin or apremilast are used for moderate to severe psoriasis to reduce the immune response.
- **Biologic Therapies:** Target specific components of the immune system. Examples include Adalimumab, Ustekinumab, Secukinumab, Risankizumab, Ixekizumab or Guselkumab. These are often used for moderate to severe cases that have failed with conventional systemic therapy.

## 4. Lifestyle Modifications:

- **Moisturising Regularly:** Keeping the skin well-hydrated can significantly reduce dryness and itching.
- **Stress Management:** Techniques such as yoga, meditation, or mindfulness can help control flare-ups related to stress.
- **Healthy Diet:** Eating a balanced diet rich in anti-inflammatory foods may help some individuals manage their condition.

### Self-Care and Home Remedies:

- Take regular baths in lukewarm water to relieve dryness and itching, adding oatmeal or dead sea or Epsom salt if desired.
- Use fragrance-free, gentle skin care products to avoid irritation.
- Avoid triggers such as smoking, excessive alcohol intake, or extreme weather conditions.

### When to Seek Medical Advice:

- If your symptoms worsen or do not improve with treatment.
- If you experience joint pain, swelling, or stiffness, which may indicate psoriatic arthritis.
- If you have any concerns regarding your treatment plan or the side effects of medications.

### Conclusion:

Chronic plaque psoriasis is a manageable condition, and with the right treatment plan, many individuals can experience significant relief from symptoms. Working closely with your healthcare provider to develop a personalised management strategy is key to controlling chronic plaque psoriasis.

For any questions or concerns about chronic plaque psoriasis or its treatment options, please consult your dermatologist.

