What causes psoriasis?

The precise causes of psoriasis are unknown. It is generally believed that psoriasis is a disorder in which factors in the immune system, enzymes, and other materials that regulate skin cell division become damaged. In psoriasis, the T cells (a type of white blood cell) abnormally trigger inflammation in the skin. These T cells also cause skin cells to grow faster than normal and to pile up in raised patches on the outer surface of the skin.

Which factors do influence the most?

Geography and Ethnicity

Climate plays significant role along with hereditary factors. Some studies evidence that the disorder develops earlier and more frequently in colder climates. For example, psoriasis occurs more frequently in African-Americans and in Caucasians who live in colder climates than in people of any ethnicity who live in Africa. Psoriasis is also common in Japanese individuals. It is uncommon in Native Americans of either North or South American descent.

The following factors can trigger psoriasis:

Stress

Stress is one of the more common causes of psoriasis. Even if a person does not have the active form of psoriasis, with no trouble at all, a significant stress may provoke this light condition to transform into chronic disorder with regular outbreaks. Needless to say, that having psoriasis can cause stress itself.

Hard work and over-activity without normal periods of relaxation is also considered to be a risky stress condition.

Cold and dry weather

As stated above, people who live in cold climates, suffer from psoriasis more frequently. Cold windy weather dries out your skin, which increases the chance of having a flare-up. In contrast, hot and sunny weather helps to control the symptoms of psoriasis in most people.

Certain medications

Different drugs, mostly used as a treatment for: bipolar disorder, high blood pressure, heart disease, heart arrhythmias, malaria, and also ibuprofen, which is used to reduce inflammation, can cause flare-ups of psoriasis. In any case, reaction to certain drugs and their influence on psoriasis outbreaks is strictly individual.

Infections or disease

Certain infections, such as strep throat, can result in guttate psoriasis.

Alcohol and Psoriasis

Abusing alcohol increases the chance of flare-ups, at least in men. Some studies show that drinking alcohol might be dangerous in any portions.

Trauma to the skin

Traumas to the skin including cuts, bruises, burns, bumps, vaccinations, tattoos and other skin conditions can cause a flare-up of psoriasis symptoms, either at the site of the injury or elsewhere.

Sunlight

Most sufferers consider sunlight to be beneficial for their psoriasis. However, strong sunlight may aggravate the symptoms, and bad sunburn may worsen the condition significantly.

Smoking

Cigarette smokers have an increased risk of chronic plaque psoriasis. It is even more dangerous in combination with alcohol and a bad diet.

Hormone changes

The severity of psoriasis may fluctuate with hormonal changes. The disease frequency peaks during puberty and menopause. A pregnant woman's symptoms are more likely to improve than worsen, if any changes occur at all. In contrast, symptoms are more likely to flare in the postpartum period, if any changes occur at all.

Read more about psoriasis related issues in our **Psoriasis Relief Handbook** .

Risk factors

Provoking factors reported by patients

Causing psoriasis (%)

Worsening psoriasis (%)

Stress, other psychological traumas

49

41

Infectious diseases including strep, vaccinations

15

21

Physical traumas including burns, bites, cuts, etc.

14

12

Hormone changes (pregnancy, menopause etc.)

6

6

Cold weather, especially being out for a long time

5

4

Intensive drug therapy (antibiotics, phyto drugs etc.)

3

6

Wrong diet (abusing products worsening condition like chocolate, citrus etc.), general food poisoning

3

4

Alcohol intoxication

2

3

Abusing direct sunlight (insolation). Climate changes

2

2

Other factors

1

1