



## August is Psoriasis Awareness Month

### What is Psoriasis?

No one knows exactly what causes Psoriasis but it is considered a chronic, autoimmune disease that appears on the skin. Most researchers agree that the immune system is somehow mistakenly triggered, which causes a series of events, including acceleration of skin cell growth. However, **Psoriasis is not contagious.**

There are five types of psoriasis: plaque, guttate, inverse, pustular and erythrodermic. The most common form, plaque psoriasis, appears as raised, red patches or lesions covered with a silvery white buildup of dead skin cells, called scale. Psoriasis can occur on any part of the body.

### Quick Facts:

- Psoriasis is the most prevalent autoimmune disease in the U.S.
- According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), as many as 7.5 million Americans (approximately 2.2 percent of the population) have psoriasis.
- 125 million people worldwide (2 to 3 percent of the total population) have psoriasis.

### Common Triggers:

Psoriasis triggers are not universal. What may cause one person's psoriasis to become active, may not affect another. Established psoriasis triggers include:

- Stress
- Injury to the skin
- Certain medications

Although scientifically unproven, some people with psoriasis suspect that allergies, diet and weather trigger their psoriasis. Strep infection is known to trigger guttate psoriasis. Scientists believe that at least 10 percent of the general population inherits one or more of the genes that create a predisposition to psoriasis.

Since discovering that inflammation in psoriasis is triggered by T cells, researchers have been studying new treatments that quiet immune system reactions in the skin. Among these are treatments that block the activity of T cells or block cytokines (proteins that promote inflammation). For more information, please visit <http://www.niams.nih.gov>.