Do You Think You Have Been Misdiagnosed?

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Psoriasis Misdiagnosis

When you have an ongoing condition, like psoriasis, getting an accurate diagnosis is a vital. After all, psoriasis is a lifelong condition that can be managed with the right treatment plan, so you might want to look into a psoriasis misdiagnosis.

But because psoriasis has symptoms and characteristics that mimic other conditions, it is possible your doctor may not diagnose you correctly and a psoriasis misdiagnosis can occur.

Here is what you need to know about psoriasis, its symptoms, and what to do if you think you have a psoriasis misdiagnosis.

What is Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is an inflammatory skin disease caused by the body's malfunctioning immune system. The National Psoriasis Foundation reports at least 7.5 million Americans are affected.

It is not contagious condition despite misconceptions.

And it isn't simply a skin disease because it starts underneath the skin. It is a chronic (long lasting) condition where symptoms range from mild to severe.

Symptoms of Psoriasis

Psoriasis is characterized by dry, flaky, red patches on the skin. These can appear anywhere on the body, but usually on the arms, legs, elbows, knees, and scalp.

The patches are a result of the body's immune system triggering skin to reproduce too quickly resulting in cell buildup on the skin's surface.

And psoriasis doesn't just affect the skin. It may also affect the joints, causing stiffness and pain and tendons causing inflammation.

Psoriasis also increases your risk for heart disease, diabetes, psoriatic arthritis (a condition where you have both psoriasis and arthritis), and metabolic syndrome (a cardiovascular complication resulting in several other conditions).

Since its symptoms can overlap with other conditions, you might run into a psoriasis misdiagnosis.

Importance of Getting a Correct Diagnosis

Since psoriasis is known to affect your entire body, your doctor will likely take a wide-ranging approach.

But a big concern for psoriasis patients is many people, including doctors, consider psoriasis a skin condition and only look at the skin symptoms in diagnosis and treatment, and that is a big mistake leading to some serious health problems.

One study in the Dermatology Times finds severe psoriasis may lead to an increased risk for cardiovascular and metabolic disorders.

Psoriasis can also lead to psoriatic arthritis, which leads to joint inflammation, depression, decreased life quality, and a shorter life span if not managed and treated properly. At least one-third of people with psoriasis will also develop psoriatic arthritis.

Educating Yourself About Psoriasis

To distinguish psoriasis from other skin conditions it helps if you understand the types of psoriasis and some of the other conditions psoriasis is often mistaken for.

Plaque Psoriasis

Plaque psoriasis is the most common type, affecting at least 80% to 90% of people with psoriasis according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

Plaque psoriasis causes red, inflamed skin patches covered with silver, white scales that may itch and burn. These patches may appear anywhere on the body but they are mostly seen on the elbows, knees, low back, and scalp.

Guttate

Guttate psoriasis is mostly seen in children and young adults and causes small, pink notes on the skin. The spots appear on the stomach upper arms, thighs, and scalp.

Triggered by an upper respiratory or bacterial infection (i.e. strep), stress, skin injury, and certain medications, this type of psoriasis goes away on its own without treatment within a few weeks without medication.

Inverse

Inverse psoriasis shows up as bright red, smooth, and shiny spots, under the breasts, in the groin area and/or the skin folds around the buttocks and genitals, and under the arms. Sweating and rubbing worsen inverse psoriasis and yeast build up is a trigger.

Pustular

Pustular psoriasis is rare but it is mostly seen in adults. It causes pustules (pus filled bumps) surrounded by inflamed skin on the hands and feet, but it may cover most of the body in rare and very serious cases.

Pustular psoriasis covering the entire body is called generalized pustular psoriasis and causes fever, chills, nausea, muscle weakness, and fast heart rate. Triggers include topical and steroid medications, too much ultraviolent light, pregnancy, stress, infection, and chemical exposure.

Erythrodermic

Erythrodermic psoriasis is rare but it is a very serious condition affecting most of the body, causing skin to appear burned. It also causes severe itching, burning and peeling, a fast heart rate, and body temperature changes. These symptoms might warrant emergency attention and as they can result in infection, pneumonia, or heart

failure.

This type of psoriasis is triggered by sudden stopping of psoriasis treatments, allergic drug reaction, severe sunburns, infections, and some medications. It may also occur if your psoriasis is difficult to control.

Skin Conditions Resembling Psoriasis

There a number of skin conditions that share similar characteristics to psoriasis. Knowing the symptoms and causes of these conditions can help you identify and speak to your doctor about the symptoms you are experiencing.

A rash concentrated on the oily parts of the skin might be a condition called seborrheic dermatitis. It also causes itching and scaly skin on the scalp that looks like dandruff.

Lichen planus results in skin lesions that are autoimmune (where the immune system attacks itself) in nature.

Ringworm is fungal infection affecting the top layer of the skin and unlike psoriasis, ringworm is contagious.

Lastly, if you have pityriasis rosea, it generally starts with one large rash in one area of your body and spreads to other parts of the body, usually the trunk, upper arms and upper legs. It usually goes away on its own and steroid creams, antihistamines, and anti-viral medications can help to treat symptoms.

Getting the Right Diagnosis

Your family doctor or a dermatologist can diagnose psoriasis. You will be asked about family history and what may have triggered symptoms.

A physical exam, including a skin exam, is also done. Your doctor might request a biopsy where a small sample of skin is obtained to confirm psoriasis.

If you have been diagnosed with another skin condition and think you have psoriasis, make an appointment with your doctor and ask for a biopsy. A biopsy is the most accurate method for confirming psoriasis.

If you are not satisfied with your doctor’s diagnosis, get a second opinion. A dermatology referral is good option for getting a correct diagnosis.

While there is no cure for psoriasis, knowing you have it can help diagnose other conditions and determine your risk factors for diabetes, psoriatic arthritis, metabolic syndrome, and cardiovascular diseases.

If you are concerned that you have been misdiagnosed, it is your responsibility to be proactive. Your doctor will rely on the information you provide in reaching a correct diagnosis and finding the right treatment plan.

And remember, no piece of information or concern is silly or unimportant when it comes to your health.