



Understanding Psoriatic arthritis

Psoriatic arthritis (PA) is an inflammatory autoimmune condition in which the immune system mistakenly attacks the joints. Up to 1 in 3 people with the skin condition psoriasis will go on to develop PA.



Most people who experience PA have had psoriasis for ten or more years. However, it is possible to develop PA without showing symptoms of psoriasis. PA is most likely to develop in middle age, though it can occur at any age. It can even occur in children.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

The most common symptom of PA is pain and swelling of the joints. The joints most likely to be affected include the fingers, ankles, wrists, and knees.

Swelling of the fingers and toes is also common. This is called dactylitis, which causes discomfort and difficulty bending or using the fingers. In addition, the swelling can lead to stiffness and decreased range of motion, especially in the morning.

Other symptoms of PA include fatigue, redness of the eyes, and pitting of the nails.

Though PA is predominantly a joint condition, some organs of the body may be affected. For example, the digestive system, lungs, and heart can be damaged if the condition is left untreated.

DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

While there is no diagnostic test for PA, doctors make a diagnosis based on their observation, a health history, and by ruling out other possibilities. Tests that may be used include X-rays to assess the bones and joints and blood tests to look for markers of inflammation.

Prompt treatment of PA is essential to prevent damage to the joints or organs. Unfortunately, there is no cure for PA, but many treatment options are available to manage pain and decrease inflammation.

A primary care doctor, rheumatologist, and dermatologist may all be part of the care team for treating PA.

LIVING WITH PA

Thanks to the many effective treatments available, people with PA can reduce the side effects of the condition and lead active, healthy lives.

In addition to medical resources, lifestyle habits such as exercise and eating an anti-inflammatory diet can help manage symptoms.

If you have PA, always talk to your doctor to find out what activities or lifestyle choices are right for you.



Sources: Arthritis Foundation, National Psoriasis Foundation