

When a child becomes ill, with any condition, it can be distressing not only for the child, but for the parents, siblings, relatives and friends. It is, after all, natural for a parent to be concerned and even worried about the health of their children. Even when their child is an adult, that concern and worry continues, particularly when they have a chronic condition.

So, what are the chances of a child developing either psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis? The heredity factor seems to play a part. About one third of people with psoriasis are able to identify a relative, living or dead, with psoriasis. It is estimated that if one parent has psoriasis, there is a 15% chance that a child will develop the condition. If both parents have psoriasis, this increases to about 75%. Interestingly, if a child develops psoriasis and neither parent is affected, there is a 20% chance that a brother or sister will also get psoriasis. This is because the condition is known to skip generations but somewhere there will be a familial link to a relative with psoriasis via either or both parents.

What triggers psoriasis in children?

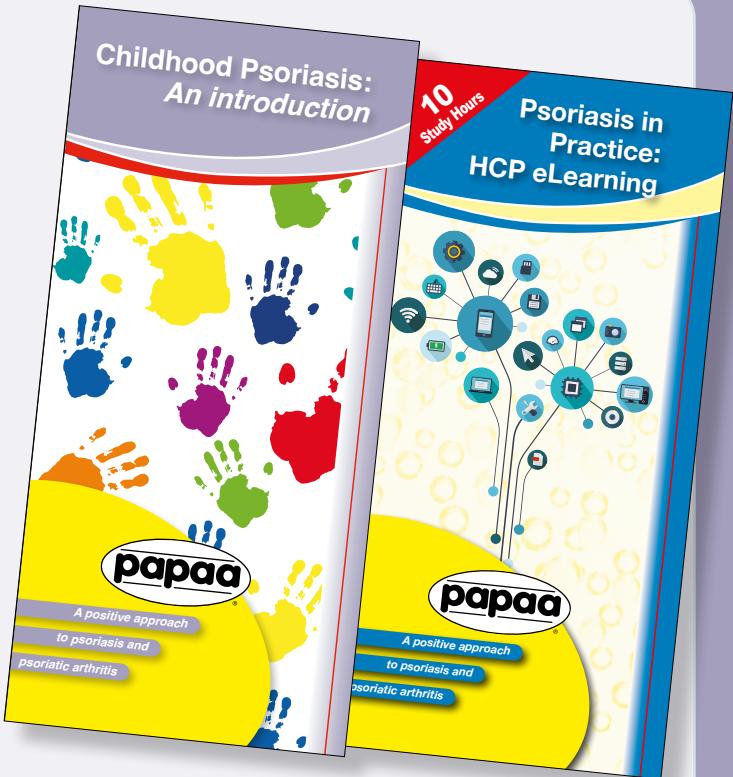
Symptoms only develop if they are triggered by certain events; most frequently in children and teenagers, symptoms follow a throat infection, due to streptococcal bacteria. This type of psoriasis is known as guttate psoriasis or raindrop psoriasis, so named because it manifests itself over the body in the form of scaly patches with a droplet-like shape. Numerous small, red, scaly patches quickly develop over a wide area of skin, although the palms and the soles are usually not affected. Some people will go on in later life to develop chronic plaque psoriasis.

What does psoriasis in babies look like?

Babies can develop psoriasis in the nappy area, appearing as a bright red, weeping rash or more typical psoriasis plaques. A child who has nappy area psoriasis as a baby does not seem to have a higher risk of developing other forms of psoriasis in later life.

What if a child develops a rash?

Any rashes on a child should be checked out by a doctor or healthcare provider, to rule out other conditions. If a child develops a rash, the doctor should be informed that there is a family history of psoriasis and/or psoriatic arthritis. This is important because, during initial diagnosis, psoriasis can otherwise be mistaken for another skin condition such as eczema.



What are the treatments for psoriasis in children?

Generally, those used in children are the same as for adult psoriasis, although there may be dosage differences and some products might not have a licence for use in children.

Raising awareness

Although there is a good understanding of psoriasis among healthcare professionals, it is not always considered as a possible diagnosis in young children. Raising general awareness in the wider population requires walking a fine line between causing unnecessary worry and providing insightful advice.

PAPAA has recently started a new childhood psoriasis campaign to support parents and raise the level of knowledge of healthcare providers in caring for children with the condition. Two initial pieces of activity have been developed; a new educational booklet aimed at parents, called *Childhood Psoriasis: An introduction*, and a training module for healthcare professionals in version 9 of our accredited *Psoriasis in Practice* online course. The aim is to develop further work to raise awareness that provides positive support and increases knowledge.

More information:
www.papaa.org/children