

Psoriatic Arthropathy (PA)

WHAT IS PA?

Psoriatic Arthropathy (pronounced sor-eye-atic arth-rop-erthee) is a condition in which Psoriasis (a skin condition in which the skin cells grow too quickly and flake off leaving patches of scaly redness) is linked to the development of arthritis (when the joints become inflamed, may swell and become stiff and sore).

PSORIATIC ARTHROPATHY (PA)

HOW IS PA PASSED ON?

As yet, no clear pattern of inheritance has been established for PA but a genetic link is probable. Approximately 40% of people with PA appear to have relatives with either Psoriasis or PA. It appears that certain genes which regulate immunity to infection play a role in the development of PA, but that some environmental factor is needed to trigger the condition (e.g. a virus, hormones, a toxin, injury etc.)

A PERSON WITH PA MAY BE AFFECTED IN SOME, OR ALL, OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- People with Psoriasis (pronounced sor-eye-er-sis) can feel very self-conscious about their appearance, particularly if the Psoriasis is on their hands, feet, scalp or face. Shaking hands can be embarrassing as the skin feels rough and scaly and the nails may be pitted and loose.
- It is common for people with PA to have arthritis in the end joints of the fingers and toes. These may swell painfully and have a 'sausage-like' appearance. In some cases, the finger and toe joints may be completely destroyed.
- Other joints, for example in the spine, can also be affected leading to pain and stiffness.
- People with PA may need to be on long-term medication for both Psoriasis and arthritis. The Psoriasis may be treated with steroid creams, coal tar (which is messy and smells unpleasant), ultraviolet light and/or a range of other drug treatments. The arthritis may be treated with anti-inflammatory drugs to start with, moving onto stronger drugs if necessary. Many of these drugs have toxic side-effects and can damage internal organs such as the liver when used in high doses or for any length of time.
- Treatment can take up a lot of time. Frequent visits to the doctor or hospital may be necessary, and self-medication at home with creams and lotions requires a regular daily routine.
- Having to live with painful joints, sore and sometimes itchy patches of skin, and being aware that there is no cure for PA, can make some people with the condition feel very tired and depressed.

OTHER INFORMATION

On average, it takes 28 days for skin cells to migrate to the surface where they die and are shed naturally. The same process takes only four days in a person with Psoriasis.

The same ultraviolet (UV) rays which can cause sunburn can help people with Psoriasis. Many people who live in cold climates find their Psoriasis improves in the summer when they are exposed to more natural sunlight.

In PA, successful treatment of the Psoriasis has no effect on the Arthritis and vice versa.

If you are interested in finding out more about PA, you can write (enclosing an A5 stamped addressed envelope) to:

The Psoriatic Arthropathy Alliance (PAA), PO Box 111 ,St.Albans, Herts. AL2 3JQ.