Psoriasis

You have psoriasis. This condition causes red, scaling patches to appear on the elbows, knees, trunk and scalp. It can cause the skin to itch, crack, bleed and become infected. Psoriasis appears to be inherited and is due to an abnormal immune system response. It is not contagious. The rash appears when the skin cells grow much faster than normal. Psoriasis can be made worse by a cut, bruise, insect bite, burn or infection. It is also worsened by emotional distress, friction on the skin, alcohol ingestion and some medication use.

Psoriasis is usually mild, but it can be severe. It may also be associated with arthritis in up to 10% of patients. Treatment is usually effective, but the condition cannot be cured. Self-care includes weight loss to reduce skin friction, keeping affected areas well moisturized, exposing the affected area to sunlight, and avoiding scratching, rubbing or picking at the sores. In mild cases, over-the-counter coal tar preparations (soaps, shampoo and ointments), combined with bath oils, may be used. Cortisone creams and ointments, an anti-cancer medication or a psoralen drug may be used in more severe cases. Ultraviolet B light treatments may also be used but should be discussed first with your caregiver. Call your caregiver for a follow-up visit within 2 to 3 weeks.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is increasing pain in affected areas.
- There is uncontrolled bleeding in affected areas.
- There is increasing redness or warmth in the affected areas.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).

Document Released: 01/25/2006 Document Re-Released: 03/14/2011
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