

5 Things Dermatologists Want You to Know About Psoriasis

Because Kim Kardashian isn't the only one struggling with it.

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Date: January 25th, 2017

URL: <http://www.marieclaire.com/beauty/news/a24994/what-is-psoriasis/>



In the United States alone, 7.5 million people suffer from psoriasis—and Kim Kardashian has bravely made her years-long struggle public. When she first opened up about the skin disease on *Keeping Up With the Kardashians* in 2011, she feared it could threaten her career by spreading to her face. And after a few tumultuous months, she revealed that it has.

1. It's chronic. "Psoriasis is a chronic, immune-mediated disease," explains Dr Debbie Palmer, co-founder of Dermatology Associates of NY and author of *Beyond Beauty: Proven Secrets to Age Well, Look 10 years Younger & Live a Truly Happy, Healthy, Long Life*. But while it's hereditary and can run in the family, it doesn't necessarily mean you're going to develop it.

2. It can appear anywhere on the body. But the thick, scaly red plaques, which are caused by a ten-fold increase in the rate at which new skin cells are produced, are more likely to appear in certain areas like the elbows, knees, shins, arms, lower back, underside of the breasts, and the scalp. "Psoriasis patches surface in response to environmental stimuli," says dermatologist Dr. Janet Prystowsky. "It could be friction, infection, or certain medications."

3. It's not curable, but can be controlled. "Most psoriasis flare ups are mild and can be treated with

topical antibiotics," explains Prystowsky. "Sun exposure can also help resolve a psoriasis flare up. However, prolonged sun exposure can increase your risk of skin cancer and is not always recommended. More extreme flare ups may require oral or injectable medications. Some of these medications work by seriously suppressing your immune system."

4. Stress is a major flare-up inducer. Kim Kardashian's recent bout of psoriasis on her visage is unfortunately a perfect example. "As stressful as psoriasis flare ups can be, somebody's patches may only go away when their stress levels return to normal," says Prystowsky.

5. Lifestyle can make or break your condition. Stress-reducing activities like yoga or meditation, along with healthy eating (think anti-inflammatory à la the Mediterranean Diet) and proper sleep go a long way. "Many patients have told me that after changing their lifestyle they had a dramatic improvement of their psoriatic skin lesions along with improvement in mood, clarity of thinking, and productivity at work," explains Dr. Palmer.

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