

# PSORIASIS

by Evelyn Valcourt

Psoriasis is a skin disease that causes scaling and swelling. Skin cells grow deep in the skin and slowly rise to the surface. This process is called cell turnover and takes about a month. With psoriasis, it can happen in just a few days because the cells rise too fast and pile up on the surface. Most psoriasis causes patches of thick, red skin with silvery scales, which can itch or feel sore. These patches are often found on the elbows, knees, other parts of the legs, scalp, lower back, face, palms and soles of the feet, but can show up in other places as well.

Anyone can get psoriasis, but it occurs more often in adults. Sometimes there is a family history of psoriasis. Certain genes have been linked to the disease. Men and women get psoriasis at about the same rate.

More specifically, I first got psoriasis about 7 years ago. It started on my right hand, then moved to my left hand. After awhile, it moved to the bottom of both my feet. I was confined to wearing moccasin-type slippers for a few years. As for my hands, I would try to wear very thin gloves as the skin would crack and bleed. I am not a hairstylist, but I have heard that psoriasis is sometimes called "a hairstylists' special". As a professional consultant and wig stylist, I still have to use products such as sprays, which certainly doesn't help psoriasis.

I tried all kinds of prescribed ointments; nothing seemed to work. What seemed to help the most were the product, "Mazon", an over-the-counter ointment, as well as an antiseptic ointment called "Bag Balm". They say Shania Twain uses that on her skin. The two over-the-counter ointments seemed to help better for the itch than cortisone, which literally ate my skin.

I noticed that my liking for chocolate was making it a daily item in my diet, yet I had read that people with psoriasis should not eat chocolate. I started adding milled flaxseed to my diet. I treat myself better by eating healthier. Of course, I still like chocolate, but I don't want to suggest that everyone who has psoriasis try chocolate.

How someone learns to cope with psoriasis is a very individual thing and is not easy. I can't tell you how I got rid of all this psoriasis. Doctors had told me that I would have to live with it all my life, but I am now enjoying life very much without psoriasis. Psoriasis seems to behave somewhat like Alopecia. Everyone is different. People with psoriasis have it disappear for no reason and then come back. No one knows, as psoriasis is so mysterious and does what it wants to do. For my psoriasis to go away, it was probably time for it to go, and it may not be related to anything other than the fact that it was time. Who knows - the doctors don't even seem to know.

For more information, or to become a member, contact Psoriasis Society of Canada, National Office, P.O. Box 25015, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3M 4H4 Toll-free 1-800-656-4494.