

**Jim Morelli:** Ralph Maglio developed psoriasis eight years ago, and at times it drives him absolutely crazy.

**Ralph:** I've been driving down the highway in the car and all of a sudden, I have to take one hand off the wheel<sup>(1)</sup> and just start scratching, you know, it's uncontrollable because that's the feeling that you have...

**Morelli:** Itching<sup>(2)</sup>, flaking<sup>(3)</sup>, redness and pain, those are the most obvious symptoms of psoriasis but there is another symptom you can't see: embarrassment.

**Ralph:** It's crusty<sup>(4)</sup>, thick, it turns a certain white color and so forth<sup>(5)</sup>, you know people will notice, and earlier on, I was very worried about that.

**Morelli:** Dr Mathew Avram, a dermatologist at the Massachusetts' General Hospital, says that, while psoriasis is rarely life-threatening, it can be emotionally devastating.

**Dr Avram:** It is a skin condition but it has effects that go beyond<sup>(6)</sup> the skin in terms of affecting lifestyle, creating depression in certain patients.

**Morelli:** That's because psoriasis is a lifelong disease that can be unsightly<sup>(7)</sup> and finding the right treatment it can be difficult.

**Dr Avram:** There are multiple treatments for psoriasis, perhaps more than any other condition we're treating in dermatology. The issue, however, is that certain things work for some people while they don't work on others.

**Morelli:** Psoriasis results when skin cells mature seven to 10 times faster than they're supposed to, perhaps due to a problem with the patient's immune system. The cells accumulate into lesions and easily flake off<sup>(8)</sup>. Psoriasis most commonly affects the hands and knees but it can pop up<sup>(9)</sup> anywhere anytime. And heredity plays a role in determining who gets it.

**Dr Avram:** If one parent has psoriasis, there is an 8% chance that the offspring<sup>(10)</sup> will have psoriasis. If both parents have psoriasis, it's about 40%.

**Morelli:** The main stay of treatment, topical<sup>(11)</sup> medications including steroids, but patients have other options too, including a natural one. Something many psoriasis patients can benefit from is regular exposure to sunlight, but that does not mean unlimited exposure and it certainly does not mean that they can forget about sunscreen.

Because a sunburn or any entry to the skin can actually trigger new areas of psoriasis. A potentially safer alternative, phototherapy. In these booths<sup>(12)</sup>, people are exposed to a measured amount of artificial sunlight. Ralph Maglio says that for him dealing successfully with psoriasis has meant coming to terms<sup>(13)</sup> with the disease.

**Ralph:** There are certain things I can't do with psoriasis. It would be different without.

**Morelli:** I'm Jim Morelli.

**Dr Gupta:** You know psoriasis is not just a frustrating disease for patients but it can be for doctors as well. Often a treatment that cures one case of psoriasis will have little effect on another.

**Robin Meade:** Now because of that variability, doctors say it is important for psoriasis patients to be upfront<sup>(14)</sup> with their healthcare provider, what's working, what's not. You can find out more information about psoriasis from the National Psoriasis Foundation at [www.psoriasis.org](http://www.psoriasis.org).  
**CNN.**

### Lexical helpline:

1. **the wheel:** the steering wheel (of a car)
2. **itching:** irritating sensation that makes someone want to scratch
3. **flaking:** forming into flakes and falling down
4. **crusty:** forming a hard upper layer
5. **and so forth:** and so on
6. **beyond:** past a particular stage or situation
7. **unsightly:** not pleasant to look at
8. **flake off:** peel off
9. **pop up:** appear
10. **offspring:** descendants
11. **topical:** applied externally and locally
12. **booth:** a small compartment
13. **come to terms:** start to accept a difficult situation
14. **upfront:** clear, outspoken