

Psoriasis patients may face higher heart risk

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They should be screened for signs of cardiovascular disease, expert says.

(HealthDay) -- People with the painful skin condition psoriasis may be at increased risk for health problems that affect the heart, an expert says.

Excessive inflammation is a major feature of psoriasis. [Chronic inflammation](#) is also a characteristic of [insulin resistance](#), obesity, abnormal [cholesterol levels](#) and cardiovascular disease, said Dr. Joel Gelfand, an assistant professor of dermatology and epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine in Philadelphia.

Gelfand noted that recent studies have linked these serious medical conditions with psoriasis and it's important for psoriasis patients -- particularly those with severe psoriasis -- to monitor themselves for signs of these diseases.

The recent studies included research on more than 4,000 patients that found that the more surface area of skin affected by psoriasis, the more likely a patient is to have [metabolic syndrome](#), which is a cluster of conditions -- obesity, [high blood pressure](#), insulin resistance and elevated triglyceride levels -- associated with increased risk of heart disease.

Another study found that patients with severe psoriasis die about five years earlier than those who don't have the disease, and about 50 percent of the increased risk of death is due to cardiovascular disease, Gelfand said in a news release from the American Academy of Dermatology. Other studies have linked severe psoriasis to increased risk of major [cardiovascular events](#), such as [heart attack](#).

Gelfand also explained in the news release that other research has found that psoriasis patients have changes in cholesterol that can increase the risk of hardening of the arteries, which can lead to heart attack.

The report was slated for presentation Friday at the American Academy of Dermatology's annual meeting in San Diego. The data and conclusions of research presented at medical meetings should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Although the report indicates an association between psoriasis and cardiovascular risks, it did not prove a cause-and-effect relationship.

"Future research is necessary to better determine how skin-disease severity affects the risk of developing insulin resistance, obesity, abnormal cholesterol levels and cardiovascular disease, and whether successful treatment of psoriasis alters these risks," Gelfand said in the news release.

More information: The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [psoriasis](#).

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