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Home Illnesses and conditions Muscle, bone and joints Conditions Psoriatic arthritis Psoriatic arthritis is a type of arthritis that develops in some people with the skin condition psoriasis. It typically causes affected joints to become inflamed (swollen), stiff and painful. Between 20-40% of people with psoriasis will develop psoriatic arthritis. Psoriasis affecting the skin affects around 3% of people. In most cases, people will experience problems with their skin before they notice any symptoms affecting their joints. In a minority of cases, skin problems may develop after or at the same time as joint problems. Like psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis is thought to be a result of the immune system mistakenly attacking healthy tissue. It’s not clear why some people with psoriasis develop psoriatic arthritis and others don’t. The pain, swelling and stiffness associated with psoriatic arthritis can affect any joint in the body, but the condition often affects particular areas including the Tendons can also be involved – in some people they may be the major problem. Symptoms usually develop slowly meaning that many people are unaware that they are developing psoriatic arthritis. In rarer cases, symptoms can develop suddenly and without warning. The severity of the condition can vary considerably from person to person. Some people may have severe problems affecting many joints, whereas others may only notice mild symptoms in one or two joints. There may be times when your symptoms improve and periods when they get worse (known as flare-ups or relapses). Some people may reach a point where they have no symptoms at all (known as remission). Relapses can be very difficult to predict, but can often be managed with medication when they happen. You should speak to your GP if you experience constant pain, swelling or stiffness in your joints – even if you haven’t been diagnosed with psoriasis. If you have been diagnosed with psoriasis, you should have check-ups at least once a year to monitor your condition. Make sure you let your doctor know if you’re experiencing any problems with your joints. If your doctor thinks you may have arthritis, they should refer you to a rheumatologist (a specialist in joint conditions) for an assessment. A rheumatologist will usually be able to diagnose psoriatic arthritis if you have psoriasis and problems with your joints, and other types of arthritis – such as rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis – have been ruled out. A number of tests may be carried out to help confirm a diagnosis, including blood tests to check for signs of inflammation in your body and the presence of certain antibodies found in other types of arthritis, as well as X-rays or scans of your joints. The main aims of treatment will be to relieve your symptoms, slow the progression of the condition and improve your quality of life.