



# The Beacon

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## Med-Cert Medical Management Resources

*“Guiding your way to better health management”*

### What is Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is a chronic skin problem that causes skin cells to grow too quickly, resulting in thick, white, silvery, or red patches of skin. Normally, skin cells grow gradually and flake off about every 4 weeks. New skin cells grow to replace the outer layers of the skin as they shed. But in psoriasis, new skin cells move rapidly to the surface of the skin in days rather than weeks. They build up and form thick patches called plaques.

The patches range in size from small to large. They most often appear on the knees, elbows, scalp, hands, feet, or lower back. Psoriasis is most common in adults. But children and teens can get it too.

Having psoriasis can be embarrassing, and many people avoid situations where patches can show. But there are many types of treatment that can help keep psoriasis under control.

### What Causes Psoriasis?

Experts believe that psoriasis may occur when the immune system overreacts, causing inflammation and flaking of skin. In some cases, psoriasis runs in families. Researchers are studying large families affected by psoriasis to find out how it is passed from parents to their children and what might trigger the condition.

People with psoriasis often notice times when their skin gets worse. Things that

can cause these flare-ups include a cold and dry climate, infections, stress, and dry skin. Also, certain medicines, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and medicines used to treat high blood pressure or certain mental illnesses may trigger an outbreak or make your psoriasis worse.

Smoking, especially in women, makes you more likely to get psoriasis and can make it worse if you already have it.

Psoriasis is not contagious. It cannot be spread by touch from person to person.

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of psoriasis appear in different ways. Psoriasis can be mild, with small areas of rash. When psoriasis is moderate or severe, the skin gets inflamed with raised red areas topped with loose, silvery, scaling skin. If psoriasis is severe, the skin becomes itchy and tender. And sometimes large patches form and may be uncomfortable. The patches can join together and cover large areas of skin, such as the entire back.

In some people, psoriasis causes joints to become swollen, tender, and painful. This is called psoriatic arthritis. This arthritis can also affect the fingernails and toenails, causing the nails to pit, change color, and separate from the nail bed. Dead skin may build up under the nails.

Symptoms often disappear or go into remission, even without treatment, and then return.

### How is Psoriasis diagnosed?

A doctor can usually diagnose psoriasis by looking at the patches on your skin, scalp, or nails. Sometimes a skin test is used to rule out a fungal infection. But otherwise, special tests are usually not needed.

### How is it treated?

Most cases of psoriasis are mild, and treatment begins with skin care. This includes keeping your skin moist with creams and lotions. These are often used with other treatments including shampoos, ultraviolet light, and medicines your doctor prescribes.

In some cases, psoriasis can be hard to treat. You may need to try different combinations of treatments to find what works for you. Treatment for psoriasis may continue for a lifetime.

## Med-Cert News

**The Med-Cert office will be closed,  
Monday September 3<sup>rd</sup> in  
observance of Labor Day.**

## Did you know??

If the amount of water in your body is reduced by just 1%, you'll feel thirsty...



## Ask A Nurse

**Q: I brush, use mouthwash and floss and I'm still getting cavities, how can I prevent them?**

**A:** If you brush, use mouthwash, and floss, you should go over your technique and your diet with a dental professional. It could be that the acid content in your saliva is way too high. Surprisingly, food and drink items like sports drinks, diet colas, and exercise bars can contain a lot of acid and sugar, which cause tooth decay.

**Q: I have developed a receding gum line. What can I do to address it?**

**A:** See your dentist for an evaluation of your gums. There are grafting procedures available to correct these problems. Gum tissue is the only barrier between bacteria and the bones that support your teeth. So you need to have the correct amount of protection.

## July is Juvenile Arthritis Awareness Month

Approximately 294,000 children under the age of 18 are affected by Juvenile Arthritis. Contact the Arthritis Foundation for more information 1-800-328-847620 or go to: <http://www.arthritis.org/juvenile-arthritis.php>

## DON'T FORGET TO PRECERTIFY

Med-Cert's Toll-free Precert Telephone Number is (800)-356-7126 and should be reflected on your health insurance ID cards.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the employee/participant/member to make sure precertification has been done. Many plans will reduce your benefit amount if you fail to precertify.

Group Health Plans vary from one employer to the next so it is important for you to know what your health plan requires. Call the customer service representative for your health plan if you have questions.

Below is a list of some of the common Standard Precertification Notification Requirements.

- *Inpatient Hospital Stays*
- *Inpatient Treatment for Mental and Emotional Conditions or Substance Abuse*
- *Inpatient Rehabilitation Therapy*
- *Skilled Nursing Care*
- *Outpatient Stays over 12 hours*
- *Outpatient Surgeries*
- *Physical Therapy after first 6 visits*
- *Speech Therapy after first 6 visits*
- *Home Health Care*
- *Hospice Care*
- *Maternity – on confirmation of pregnancy (or at least 2 months prior to delivery) and again on admission for delivery*
- *Outpatient Procedures – refer to your Employee Benefit Plan booklet as some plans require precertification for outpatient procedures*

### Med-Cert provides:

*Utilization Management, Maternity Management, Large Case and Wellness Disease Management, Transplant Coordination and Stop Loss Assessments*  
**For information on any of our services, please call 866-261-5657 (toll free). We are on the Internet. Visit us at: [www.medcertinc.com](http://www.medcertinc.com)**

## Recipe Corner



## Pork Kabobs & Orzo Salad

### Ingredients

- 2 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp dijon mustard
- 1 lg shallot, minced
- 1 1/2 tbsp capers
- 2 roasted red bell peppers, chopped
- 6 oz green beans, chopped
- 8 oz whole wheat orzo
- 1 1/2 lb pork tenderloin, cut into 1" cubes
- 1 small red onion, cut into chunks
- 3/4 lb cherry tomatoes, preferably on the vine
- 1/2 C chopped fresh basil

### Directions

1. Soak 8 wooden skewers (8"-10") in water at least 20 minutes.
2. Whisk together vinegar, oil, and mustard. Stir in shallot, capers, bell peppers, and salt and black pepper to taste.
3. Cook beans in boiling salted water until tender, about 3 minutes. Transfer to bowl of ice water. Return water to a boil and cook orzo per package directions. Drain orzo and beans. Add to vinaigrette, tossing to combine.
4. Heat grill to medium heat.
5. Thread each skewer with 4 pieces of pork, alternating with onion. Put tomatoes in grill pan. Grill both, turning occasionally, about 4 minutes for tomatoes and 12 to 15 minutes for kebabs.
6. Add basil to orzo. Divide kabobs, grilled tomatoes, and orzo salad among 4 plates.



This newsletter is brought to you courtesy of Med-Cert, Inc. Our sources for this edition are Web MD, Prevention magazine and About.com.