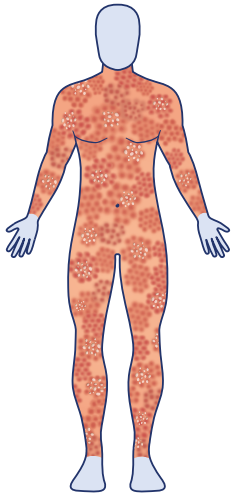
What is generalized pustular psoriasis?

Date of summary: October 2020

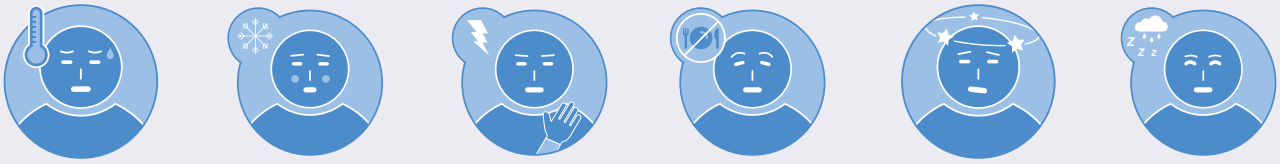
This plain language summary reports information from an article on generalized pustular psoriasis

What did this article look at?



- Generalized pustular psoriasis (GPP for short) is a serious skin condition.
- GPP is rare. Between 1 and 5 people out of every 10,000 people have GPP worldwide.
- GPP mainly affects older adults. However, it can occur at any age, including in children.
- People with GPP have "flares," during which the skin becomes red and painful. Small pus-filled blisters (called pustules) suddenly appear on many parts of their body. These pustules often get bigger and combine with other pustules, and can last for days or weeks.
  - Other symptoms may also be present.

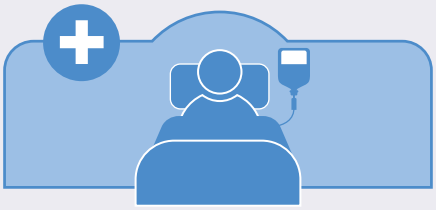
In addition to skin problems, people with GPP often have other symptoms:



Fever | **Chills** | **Severe pain** | **Loss of appetite (not feeling hungry)** | **Feeling sick** | **Feeling tired and generally unwell**

- GPP is not contagious, which means you cannot catch GPP from someone else.
- In some people, GPP can cause other severe complications – such as heart failure, kidney failure, and serious infections.

Some people may become very unwell and need to go to the hospital



- GPP flares often come back. For some people, this may happen several times in a year, and other people might not have a GPP flare for many years.
  - GPP flares have a negative impact on people's everyday quality of life.
- In this article, researchers summarized information from different studies looking at why people develop GPP, and current treatment options.

Why do people develop GPP?

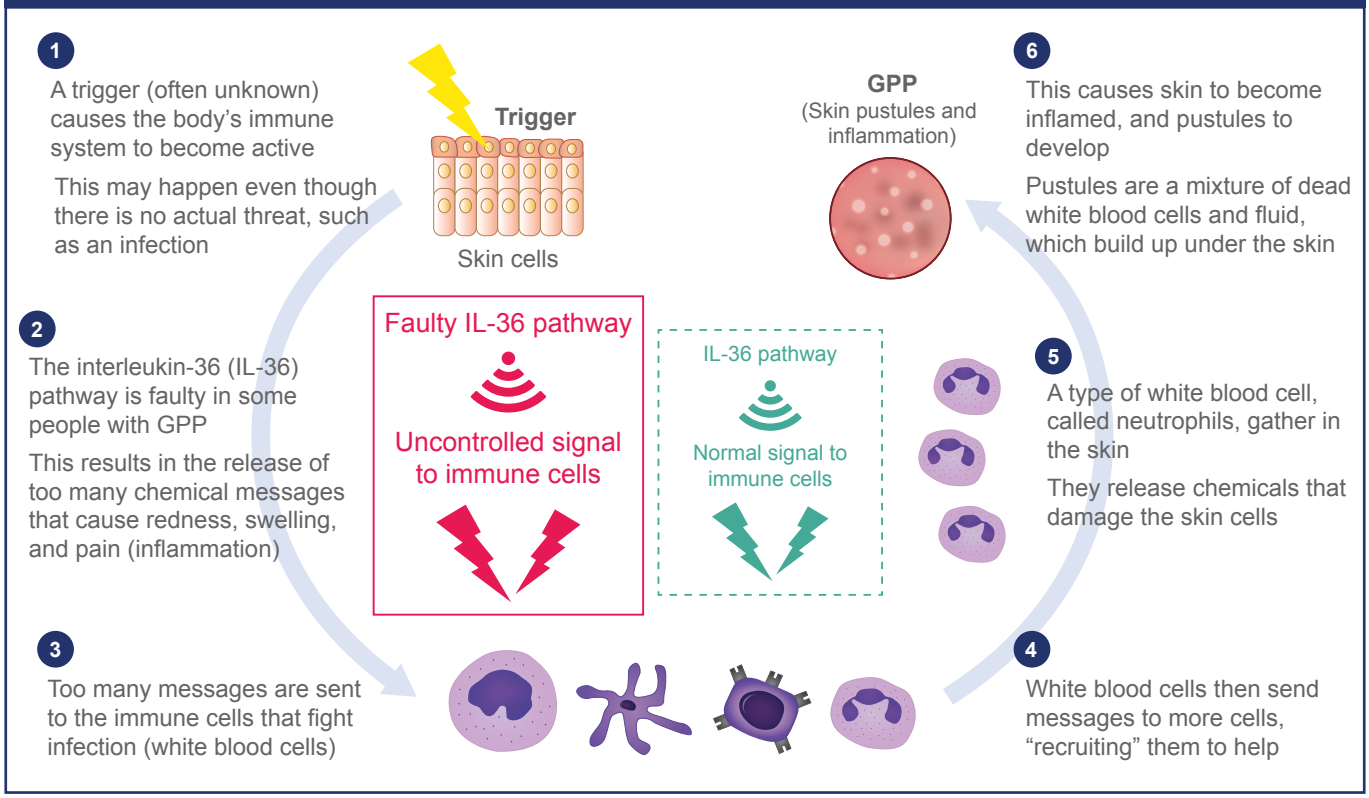
- The cause of GPP is unknown, but some factors are known to trigger a GPP flare.

Some people may have a GPP flare because of:

- Faulty genes
- Taking some medicines or suddenly stopping steroids
- Hormonal changes and pregnancy
- Periods of stress and anxiety
- Infections (eg, dental, throat)
- Too much sunlight

- Researchers state that problems with the immune system are important.
  - The interleukin-36 (IL-36 for short) pathway involves a group of proteins that act on immune cells in the skin (and other tissues). These proteins are linked to the development of GPP in some people.

Researchers think that the immune system "overreacts" in people with GPP



How do doctors treat GPP?

- There isn't a standard treatment for GPP. As GPP is rare, doctors don't have much information or guidance on the best way to treat it.
  - Doctors look at various factors, such as how bad the flare is and what risk factors a person has, to decide which treatment might be best for an individual.
  - Doctors may use different types of medicines, including certain types of cream/ointment, pills, and injections.
  - However, these treatments aren't always effective, and GPP often comes back.
- Currently, medicines that specifically treat GPP are not available in the United States or Europe. Doctors often use medicines approved for other types of psoriasis, such as plaque psoriasis, to treat people with GPP.
- Researchers are looking at newer medicines that might be more effective in treating GPP.
  - Medicines called biologics have recently become available to treat another type of psoriasis called plaque psoriasis.
  - Researchers are also developing new medicines, including some that work by acting on the IL-36 pathway.

What were the authors' main conclusions?

- New medicines and updated guidance for doctors treating people with GPP are needed.
  - Treatments for GPP should ideally work quickly, and also prevent flares from happening in the future.
  - Understanding more about why people develop GPP will help researchers to create medicines that are effective for treating GPP.
  - Medicines that target the IL-36 pathway could provide new options for treating GPP and improve people's quality of life.

How to say:

Interleukin (in-ter-loo-kin) **Psoriasis (sore-eye-a-sis)** **Pustular (puhs-choo-lar)**

Further information

You can find more information on GPP here:

- National Psoriasis Foundation
  https://www.psoriasis.org/pustular
- American Academy of Dermatology
  https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/psoriasis/treatment/genitals/pustular

The full title of this article is:
An update on generalized pustular psoriasis

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