Psoriatic arthritis is a painful, chronic inflammatory disease characterised by pain, stiffness, swelling and tenderness of the joints, inflammation of specific ligaments and tendons, and decrease in physical functioning.

There are five types of psoriatic arthritis:

1. **Symmetric**
   - Similar to rheumatoid arthritis, usually affects both sides of the body

2. **Asymmetric**
   - Affects joints of the knees, hips, ankles and wrists – does not affect both sides of the body – fingers and toes may take on a sausage-like appearance

3. **Interphalangeal predominant**
   - Occurs in only about 5%, affects the joints of the fingers and toes closest to the nail

4. **Spontaneous**
   - Found in at least 1/3 of people with psoriatic arthritis. Inflammation, pain and stiffness in the neck, back and pelvis

5. **Arthritis mutilans**
   - Severe, deforming and destructive form of psoriatic arthritis affecting fewer than 5% of people – inflammation in the small joints of the hands and feet

**Causes**

Psoriatic arthritis is caused by a combination of environmental factors that play a part but there is also a strong genetic component to the disease.

- **Exact cause unknown**
- Environmental factors play a part
- There is also a strong genetic component
- Up to 40% of people with psoriatic arthritis will have a close relative with either psoriasis or psoriatic arthritis
- Can also result from an infection that activates the immune system eg streptococcal throat infection

**Risk Factors**

Psoriatic arthritis affects men and women equally.

- Psoriatic arthritis can occur in people without skin psoriasis, particularly in those who have relatives with psoriasis.
- Average age of onset is between 30-50 years old
- It can appear as early as childhood

**Comorbidities**

People with psoriatic arthritis are at increased risk for a variety of other health issues, including:

- **Severe arthritic damage**
  - Develop destructive disabling arthritis over time
- **Fatigue**
  - Can have difficulties with work and with sleep
- **Cardiovascular disease**
  - Increased risk of heart attack and high blood pressure, due to effects of chronic inflammation
- **Obesity**
  - Strong correlation between psoriasis (found in most people with psoriatic arthritis) and obesity
- **Metabolic syndrome**
  - Has been found in 58% of patients with psoriatic arthritis

**Psychological & Emotional Effect**

Patients with psoriasis and psoriatic arthritis have a significant decrease in quality of life compared with those with psoriasis alone.

People with psoriatic arthritis can have significantly more anxiety and depression than those with just psoriasis alone.

**References**