

# HEALTH CONNECT



CONNECTING PATIENTS FOR BETTER HEALTH

## AUGUST 2018

**DIGESTIVE TRACT PARALYSIS AWARENESS MONTH**  
Sponsored by **G-PACT**  
August 2018

Digestive Tract Paralysis (DTP) is a term used to describe a group of conditions which result in the inability of the digestive tract to move food forward at a normal rate. These conditions include, but are not limited to:

- Gastroparesis - Paralyzed Stomach
- Chronic Intestinal Pseudo-Obstruction - Characterized by persistent signs and symptoms of intestinal blockage in the absence of any physical blockage
- Colonic Inertia - Affects the colon and results in the abnormal passage of stool.

Often misdiagnosed, symptoms include:

- Early Satiety
- Bloating
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal Pain
- Malnutrition
- Dehydration
- Unrelenting Constipation
- Weight Loss
- Weight Gain

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[www.gastroparesisawarenessmonth.org](http://www.gastroparesisawarenessmonth.org)

Championing toward the goal for a cure

TEAMWORK

"Individual commitment to a group effort -- that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work a civilization work"  
Vince Lombardi

## 5 Tips to Get Better Sleep

The health theme for August is "preventive health." In other words, ways you can help your body to function at its peak by recognizing, preventing and/or adjusting to life events that could negatively impact your health.

Sleep is something that everyone needs, but few get the full benefits that come from getting enough rest.

A few common issues from lack of sleep include poor or slow reaction times, drowsiness while working heavy machinery or driving motor vehicles, poor decision making, and vulnerability to illness and injury. A few tips to help improve sleep are as followed:

- Create a bedtime routine; by doing this you will train your body and mind to know when it is time to rest.
- Put worry to bed; learn how to clear your mind to get some rest, a way to do that is write about your day in a journal and let go of everything that happened. Writing it down can help let things go and worry about solving the problem another day.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine; caffeine and alcohol interfere and disrupt sleep, limit simulants a few hours before routine bed time.
- Wake up without an alarm; on days you don't have somewhere important to be (or work) try to sleep until your body wakes you up. By doing this you will be able to calculate how many hours our body needs to feel well rested and refreshed.
- Naps; if you are feeling sluggish or just tired, avoid taking a long nap. Long naps interfere with night time sleeping patterns. Try taking short 10 to 30 minute naps to rejuvenate yourself and continue to concur the day.

## Preventative Medicine: What is Your Trigger?

One of the easiest ways to "preventive health" is having a healthy and balance diet. Understanding the factors that contribute to your eating habits, those trigger events, can help you take control of the type of foods you consume and the frequency that you consume them.

Do I have to give up my favorite foods?

No! Healthy eating habits is all about a balance. You can enjoy your favorite foods even if they are high in calories, fat or added sugars.

The key is eating them only once in a while, and balancing them out with healthier foods and more physical activity.

Some general tips for comfort foods:

- Eat them less often. If you normally eat these foods every day, cut back to once a week or once a month. You'll be cutting your calories because you're not having the food as often.
- Eat smaller amounts. If your favorite higher-calorie food is a chocolate bar, have a smaller size or only half a bar.
- Try a lower-calorie version. Use lower-calorie ingredients or prepare food differently. For example, if your macaroni and cheese recipe uses whole milk, butter, and full-fat cheese, try remaking it with non-fat milk, less butter, light cream cheese, fresh spinach and tomatoes. Just remember to not increase your portion size.

The point is, you can figure out how to include almost any food in your healthy eating plan in a way that still helps you lose weight or maintain a healthy weight.

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# Immunization: Disease Prevention and Awareness

By MC2 Kris R. Lindstrom, NMCP Public Affairs Office

August is National Immunization Awareness Month (NIAM), and Naval Medical Center Portsmouth's Immunization Clinic wants all beneficiaries to know how important immunizations are to overall health and wellbeing.

Lt. Nina Shepherd, the clinic's division officer, stated that it's up to everyone to be current with vaccinations to keep harmful diseases at bay.

"We walk past people every day," said Shepherd. "So if we are safe (immunized), we are making the people around us safer as well."

Shepherd added if we stop getting vaccinations, our health would be in jeopardy.

"We would see a slow progression of more incidents of the communicable diseases that vaccinations prevent," said Shepherd. "When you look at the history, there are many studies that show that we have saved so many lives because of the preventative measures that we take. So when you take those preventative measures away, slowly but surely you are going to start seeing those diseases pop up. There are still some of these diseases out there but it's because we have such a protection against it that it's not affecting a lot of people."

The Immunization Clinic does more than simply administer shots, they also help beneficiaries understand more about the specific vaccinations and why they are necessary.

"A lot of what we do is educating," said Shepherd. "A big part of it is when we vaccinate, we educate. If anyone refuses a vaccine, we have a nurse go in there to educate and answer any questions. It's everybody's right to make the decision for themselves. If they don't have all the information, then it could be a decision that could be different had they did."

According to the National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC) website, [www.nphic.org](http://www.nphic.org), NIAM was created to promote the importance of immunizations.

"I think it is vital to have a month dedicated to vaccination awareness," said Shepherd. "What we do here is a huge impact not only to the beneficiaries, but active duty personnel, as well, when it comes to readiness."

As the U. S. Navy's oldest, continuously-operating hospital since 1830, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth proudly serves past and present military members and their families. The nationally acclaimed, state-of-the-art medical center, including its nine branch clinics located throughout the Hampton Roads area, additionally offers premier research and teaching programs designed to prepare new doctors, nurses and hospital corpsmen for future roles in healing and wellness.

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national  
**IMMUNIZATION**  
awareness month

Adults need  
vaccines, too!



**VACCINES**  
are not just for kids.

# NMCP Dermatologist: Psoriasis Awareness Month

**By MC1 Laura A. Myers  
NMCP Public Affairs Office**

August is Psoriasis Awareness Month, and a dermatologist from Naval Medical Center Portsmouth explains what's behind this inflammatory skin disease.

"I think it's good to get awareness out there in the community about what psoriasis is; it's not contagious and it's not cancer," said Lt. Cmdr. Rachel Ellis, an NMCP staff dermatologist. "It's also important for patients, too, to understand that this is your body telling you that you are sick and we have to treat your body so that your other organs are ok."

There are different types of psoriasis. The most common are guttate and plaque. Guttate psoriasis, triggered by an infection such as strep throat, can be considered short-term. It is treated with medication and it goes away.

Plaque psoriasis is a long-term condition. These are pink or red plaques on the skin, most commonly the elbows, knees and scalp, but can appear anywhere on the body. Some people develop fingernail dystrophy, and sometimes it just manifests as joint pain.

"Overall, we know the chemical pathways in the body, and we know that there's

hereditary links, but we don't really know the exact cause of it," Ellis said.

Ellis explains that psoriasis has a profound effect on a person's quality of life, something that most people misunderstand.

"It affects how they feel about themselves, and can even affect employment," Ellis said.



Psoriasis can affect a service member's medical status. Depending on severity of the disease and the treatment option, deployability may be limited.

"We try to do the most conservative treatment to keep people on active duty and keep them worldwide deployable," Ellis said. "However, if they need a systemic medication, it's more worth it to treat the disease than to keep somebody fit for full duty."

There are a multitude of treatment options, from local topical steroid creams to injections and infusions. The kind of treatment a patient receives depends on the patient and the extent of the disease.

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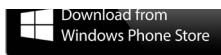
"A lot of times an employer says "you are contagious" without understanding what the disease is. Psoriasis is not contagious."

When a person is not confident with themselves, or with how they look, it may lead to depression. Depending on how bad the plaques are, they can be fissuring, uncomfortable and painful.

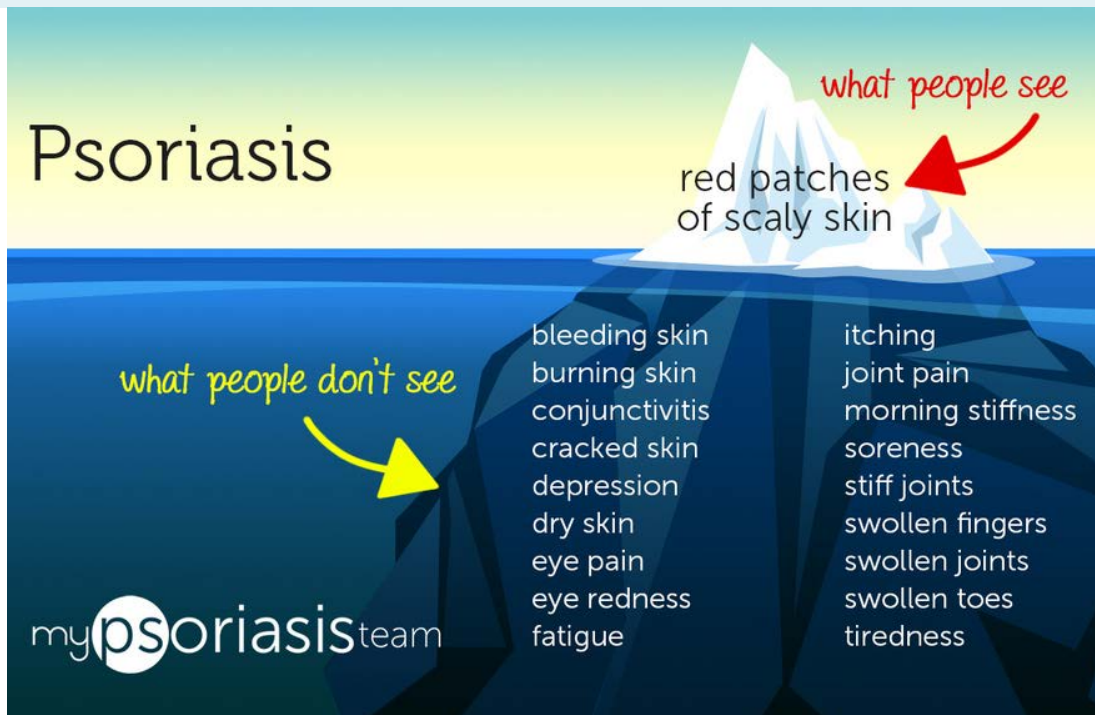
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## Psoriasis



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