Who Might Benefit?
Psoriasis is a common skin disease that causes itchy or painful patches of thick, scaly, red skin. Patches normally develop on the knees, scalp, elbows, trunk, face, hands, and feet, but can appear on other areas of the body. Psoriasis affects both children and adults, although it is more common in adults, and currently affects nearly 1 million Canadians. The disease can be long-lasting, with symptoms disappearing and reappearing on an ongoing basis. For some people, this skin condition causes only minor discomfort, but for others it severely limits daily activities, causes poor self-esteem, and may lead to isolation and depression. Rarely, the disease can be life-threatening.

Current Practice
It is unclear what causes psoriasis, but it sometimes runs in families. It is not contagious. A number of treatments are available for psoriasis, and include topical creams, oral and injectable medicines, and light therapy. Treatment options depend on how severe the disease is, treatment cost, and patient preference. Creams and solutions that are applied to the skin can give relief of symptoms, but can also be messy and impractical if a large portion of the body is affected. Many of the newer and highly effective drugs available are quite expensive. There is currently no cure for psoriasis.

Potential Advantages
In two recently published studies, people receiving secukinumab had better treatment results and their psoriasis symptoms decreased more quickly compared with people receiving another biologic drug. New therapeutic options are especially important for people who have tried existing psoriasis therapies but whose symptoms have not been adequately and continuously controlled, or who have developed resistance to treatments they had tried previously.

An injectable drug called secukinumab is a new option for treatment of moderate to severe psoriasis

What’s New?
An injectable drug called secukinumab is a new option for treatment of moderate to severe psoriasis. Moderate to severe psoriasis is usually defined as psoriasis covering more than 5% to 10% of the body’s surface, or when a person loses normal function because of the effects of the disease. Secukinumab is one of a group of drugs called biologics, which offer an important treatment alternative for people with plaque psoriasis, the most common kind of psoriasis. Biologics are effective at controlling psoriasis symptoms, with few serious side effects.