

Blistering Skin Disorders

What Are Blistering Skin Disorders?

Blistering skin disorders are conditions that cause **fluid-filled blisters (bullae or vesicles)** to form on the skin or mucous membranes. These disorders may be:

- **Autoimmune** (immune system attacks skin structures)
- **Inflammatory**
- **Medication-related**
- **Infection-related**
- **Genetic (rare cases)**

Some blistering disorders are mild and temporary. Others require **specialized medical treatment and close monitoring**.



Common Blistering Skin Conditions

Bullous Pemphigoid

- Most common autoimmune blistering disorder
- Usually affects older adults
- Causes large, tense blisters
- Often itchy before blisters form

Pemphigus Vulgaris

- Less common but more serious
- Fragile blisters that may rupture easily
- Often involves the mouth

Dermatitis Herpetiformis

- Intensely itchy small blisters
- Associated with gluten sensitivity (celiac disease)

Other Causes

- Severe eczema
- Drug reactions
- Viral infections
- Contact reactions

Your dermatologist will determine the exact diagnosis.

Symptoms to Watch For

- Large or small fluid-filled blisters
- Skin pain or burning
- Itching
- Mouth sores or painful swallowing
- Skin peeling
- Fever (in severe cases)

If you develop widespread blistering, seek prompt medical attention.

How Are Blistering Skin Disorders Diagnosed?

Diagnosis often involves:

- Careful skin examination
- **Skin biopsy** (often two samples: routine and special immunofluorescence testing)
- Blood tests (in autoimmune cases)

Because autoimmune blistering diseases can mimic other conditions, accurate diagnosis is essential.

How Are Blistering Skin Disorders Treated?

Treatment depends on severity and underlying cause.

Common treatments include:

- **Topical corticosteroids**
- **Oral corticosteroids**
- **Immunosuppressive medications**
- **Biologic therapies (in selected cases)**
- **Antibiotics (if secondary infection develops)**
- **Gluten-free diet** (for dermatitis herpetiformis)

Treatment is often tailored and may require ongoing monitoring.

Pre-Op Instructions (If Biopsy Is Needed)

If a skin biopsy is required:

- Continue medications unless instructed otherwise
- Inform us if you take blood thinners
- Arrive with clean skin
- Avoid applying creams or ointments to the biopsy area unless directed

Two biopsies are often taken to confirm autoimmune blistering disease.

Post-Op Instructions (After Biopsy or Treatment)

After Biopsy:

- Keep the area clean and dry
- Apply ointment as directed
- Cover with a bandage if needed
- Avoid picking at scabs

If Treated for Blistering:

- Take medications exactly as prescribed
- Do not abruptly stop oral steroids unless instructed
- Watch for signs of infection (increasing redness, warmth, pus, fever)
- Protect fragile skin from trauma

Call the office if:

Blistering spreads rapidly

- You develop fever or worsening pain
 - You have difficulty eating or swallowing
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Is This a Serious Condition?

Some blistering disorders are mild. Others, particularly autoimmune types, can be serious and require prompt treatment.

Early diagnosis improves outcomes and helps prevent complications.

Blistering Skin Disorders FAQ

Are blistering skin disorders contagious?

Autoimmune blistering disorders are **not contagious**.

Are they caused by infection?

Some blisters are caused by infections, but autoimmune blistering disorders occur when the immune system attacks the skin.

Will this condition go away?

Some cases resolve with treatment. Others may require long-term management.

Is a biopsy always needed?

In suspected autoimmune blistering disease, a biopsy is often necessary to confirm the diagnosis.

Can these disorders affect internal organs?

Most primarily affect the skin or mucous membranes, but severe cases require careful monitoring.

Will treatment weaken my immune system?

Some medications may suppress immune activity. Your dermatologist will monitor you carefully to balance benefits and risks.

When should I seek urgent care?

If you develop widespread blistering, fever, difficulty swallowing, or severe pain, seek medical attention promptly.