

## **Bullous Pemphigoid**

Bullous pemphigoid is a blistering skin disease which usually affects middle aged or elderly people. The blisters are due to an immune reaction within the skin. The disease is not contagious and is usually not associated with any other serious conditions.

A nonspecific red, itchy rash may be present for several weeks or months before blisters appear. Eventually, bullous pemphigoid usually results in crops of tense, fluid-filled, itchy blisters.

In most cases, the diagnosis will be confirmed by a skin biopsy. Often your dermatologist may want to do two skin biopsies, one for traditional pathology evaluation and one for testing for antibody immune deposits in the skin.

Bullous pemphigoid can be chronic and mild without substantially disturbing the general health or activity of an individual. On the other hand, in more severe cases, it can be very disabling to daily life. Mild cases can be controlled with topical prescription corticosteroid creams, but sometimes require doses of steroids (prednisone) taken internally. Severe cases can also require internal prednisone at fairly high doses for weeks or months. In these cases, the patient is often transitioned to another immune modulating medicine (like azathioprine, mycophenolate or methotrexate) while the prednisone dose is slowly weaned down.

The disease can wax and wane in severity. Treatment is usually needed for years, but then in most cases, it seems to go into remission.