

BULLOUS PEMPHIGOID

Bullous pemphigoid is the name for an uncommon skin condition which can produce blisters or bubbles in the skin. The word “bullous” is a medical term for these types of blisters. Bullous pemphigoid is not common, affecting approximately 1 in 25,000 people. When it occurs, it is more common in older patients, but it can happen at any age.

In bullous pemphigoid, the body sends signals called autoantibodies which disrupt the integrity of the skin. There is a membrane between the top layer and the bottom layer of the skin which these autoantibodies interfere with. This disruption causes the blisters that are seen in the skin. These blisters can occur anywhere on the body, including inside the mouth. Sometimes, the blisters can be very itchy and are surrounded by red, inflamed skin that can appear like hives. It is important to understand that the blisters or blister fluid are not contagious. This is not an infection.

Because there are many conditions that can cause blisters in the skin, it is often important to perform a skin biopsy tests and blood tests to determine the specific cause of the condition.

Although bullous pemphigoid can produce significant skin lesions, there are very effective treatments available. These treatments are individualized to each patient's condition. The initial treatment is usually oral steroids but, in many cases, other treatments are added to the steroids, depending on the specifics. These medications all interfere with the autoantibodies that produce the problem. Treatment is usually effective, but each patient may respond differently, and it is impossible to predict how long you will need treatment. In some cases, it can last many months; in other cases, it can even be a few years. Fortunately, in most cases, bullous pemphigoid does seem to go away and not return.

If you have any other questions regarding this condition or your treatment, please ask before you leave the office.