

A blister is raised section of skin which is full of a watery substance and is usually caused by aggravated rubbing or burns

What to look for

one or more bubbles of skin filled with clear fluid, ranging from pinpoint size to more than one-half inch in diameter usually accompanied by pain, swelling and inflammation.

Most blisters form as a reaction to irritation or other damage to the skin from an external source, although some can result from a disease or other ailment. Blisters can form on any exposed area.

Causes

Blisters can result from the rubbing of skin against another item such as from the wearing of new shoes, which causes an abrasion to form. This can happen quite quickly and is very painful.

Flames, steam, or contact with a hot surface can raise blisters, as can excessive sunburn or exposure to other types of radiation.

Skin may blister when it comes in contact with certain chemicals, cosmetics, and many other toxins.

Many people develop blisters as a reaction to taking certain oral and topical drugs.

Blisters are a common symptom of many infectious illnesses, including chickenpox, cold sores, herpes simplex, shingles, and impetigo.

Traditional Treatments

Most blisters caused by friction or minor burns do not require a doctor's care. They can usually heal on their own with a little help from you.

Soothe ordinary friction blisters with vitamin E ointment or an aloe-based cream. Do not pop a blister unless it is large and too painful to leave. If you have to pop it, use a sterilised needle or razor blade. Wash the area thoroughly, then make a small hole and gently squeeze out the clear fluid. A dab of "Dettol" can help protect against infection.

If the fluid is white or yellow, the blister is infected and needs medical attention. Do not remove the skin over a broken blister; the new skin underneath needs this protective cover. For blisters caused by chemical contact or disease see a doctor.

Alternative/Natural Treatments

If your blister is purely pressure or burn-related, various ointments and rinses can be effective in relieving minor discomfort. To make good use of other therapies, you must first determine the underlying cause of the blistering.

Herbal Therapies - A couple of drops of chamomile oil in half a cup of water makes an excellent antiseptic to be used under a protective dressing. Blisters from the herpes simplex virus respond to the herb liquorice.

Calendula ointment is a soothing, antiseptic dressing for all types of blisters. Tea Tree Oil or Aloe Vera can soothe burns as well as promote the healing process.

At-Home Remedies

- If you have a blister from friction or a minor burn, apply petroleum jelly to keep the skin soft. Then apply a bandaid.
- If your skin is blistered by chemical contact, flush it immediately with plenty of water or a saline solution. If pain or itching persists, or if large blisters develop, call a doctor.
- Forget the old folk remedy about putting butter on burns and vinegar on blisters... both can aggravate the skin and may actually cause infection.

When to seek further professional advice

- if your blister is the result of contact with chemicals
- if the blister is the result of second-degree burns and all third and fourth-degree burns are medical emergencies.
- your blister discharges white, yellow, or green pus, rather than clear fluid.