

## Diabetes-related skin conditions



Diabetes is a disease that occurs when the pancreas is unable to produce the required quantities of a hormone called insulin, or when the body cannot use the insulin produced to balance the glucose level in the blood.

As a result of this malfunction, blood glucose levels rise and cause damage to several organs in the body including the heart, kidney, nervous system, circulatory system and vision. The skin, being the largest organ in the human body, is also not spared.

Quite often, the skin is the first organ to signal that a person is prediabetic or diabetic. As the disease progresses, the skin develops several tell-tale signs that reflect the person's condition.

Many of these skin conditions such as bacterial & fungal infections, itches and dry skin are common in non-diabetics as well, so these tell-tale signs often get ignored or misdiagnosed. However, a few symptoms such as diabetic dermopathy, necrobiosis lipoidica diabetorum, diabetic blisters, and eruptive xanthomatosis are specific to diabetics only.

Below, is a list of skin conditions that result from diabetes. Being alert to these symptoms and getting treated for them will go a long way in reducing the chances of more serious diabetes-related problems.

### **Itchy dry skin**

Diabetes is known to damage the vascular system, as a result of which there is poor blood circulation to certain parts of the body, redness, and dry itchy skin. Most often, it is the lower half of the limbs which shows this symptom.

Ideally, people experiencing such itchy skin should consult a dermatologist. Until then, do not use hot water for a bath. Also, use a mild soap and apply moisturizer or cream after bathing.

### **Bacterial infections**

The following bacterial infections are the ones that are common in diabetics

- Styes or infections of the glands of the eyelid
- Boils
- Infections of the hair follicles/ also known as Folliculitis
- Carbuncles or infections below the surface of the skin and tissue below
- Nail infections

Diabetics indeed have more bacterial infections than healthy people. However, with the right antibiotic treatment, hygiene, exercise and diabetes control, these infections can be reduced.

### **Fungal infections**

The most common fungal infection in people with diabetes is *Candida albicans*. *Candida albicans* is a yeast-like fungus that creates itchy, red rashes in moist areas. The infected part is surrounded by tiny blisters and flaky scales. Most often, they are found in the warm, moist folds of the skin such as under the breasts, under a belly fold, around the cuticle and nails, between fingers and toes, in the corners of the mouth, under the foreskin, in the armpits and groin.

A good doctor will recommend a blood test to check the blood glucose level and prescribe a fungicide and a diabetes control regimen

### **Acanthosis nigricans**

Acanthosis nigricans is a typical diabetic condition in which dark brown raised areas appear on either side of the neck, armpits, groin, knuckles, elbows, and knees. The condition is usually noticed in people who are very overweight. While topical applications can help, the best solution is to lose weight.

### **Diabetic dermopathy**

Increased blood sugar levels make changes in the small blood vessels and cause skin problems called diabetic dermopathy. Light brown, oval or circular scaly patches can be found on the skin, on the front of both legs. Even though Dermopathy is harmless, it is better to consult a physician who can advise the best solution for the condition.

### **Necrobiosis lipoidica diabetorum**

Necrobiosis lipoidica diabetorum is a rare condition, also caused by changes in the blood vessels. Found more commonly in women, the disease manifests itself in spots that are similar to diabetic dermopathy. However, they are fewer, bigger, and extend deeper in the layers of the skin. Although it starts as a dull, red, raised area, it soon becomes a vivid scar with a violet border with visible blood vessels under the skin. The disease can be itchy and painful and the scars can also crack open. It is best to consult a physician before it gets to this stage.

### **Diabetic blisters - bullosis diabetorum**

In rare cases, diabetics who have diabetic neuropathy erupt in diabetic blisters on the backs of their hands, fingers, feet, toes, legs or forearms. These sores resemble blisters that appear after a burn wound. Although they are large, they do not hurt and they heal by themselves, in a few weeks. It can be treated only by bringing the blood glucose levels under control.

### **Eruptive xanthomatosis**

Eruptive xanthomatosis usually occurs in young men with type 1 diabetes and is a result of sugar levels that are way off the mark. Patients come up with firm, yellow, pea-shaped bumps on the skin, which is surrounded with a red circle. It appears on the backs of hands, feet, arms, legs and buttocks most often. Patients who have this disorder also usually have high levels of cholesterol and fat in the blood. Once diabetes is controlled, these bumps automatically disappear.

### **Digital sclerosis**

Sometimes, a few type 1 diabetics develop thick, waxy skin on the back of their palms, toes and/or forehead. Such patients can also experience stiffness of the finger joint, elbows, knees, ankles or elbows. While this is not a very common condition the only way to reverse this condition is by bringing blood glucose levels under control.

### **Disseminated granuloma annulare**

This is a diabetes-related skin condition in which the person has clearly defined reddish-brown ring- or arc-shaped raised areas on the skin. These rashes are mostly found in parts of the body that are far from the torso (like fingers or ears), but sometimes they can also occur on the torso. A good physician can treat this condition and reverse the effects.

### **Allergic rashes**

Allergic skin reactions or rashes can appear as a reaction to medication such as insulin or diabetes pills. Patients and caregivers must watch out for rashes, depressions, or bumps at the sites where insulin has been injected and reach out to their doctor immediately.

Basic skin care can work well for most people, but for those who are borderline diabetic or diabetic, it is best that they follow a skin care routine that will prevent problems later on.

As we at Freedom from Diabetes always say, prevention is better than cure. And if that's not always possible, there's always our diabetes reversal program that has helped tens of thousands of diabetes patients reverse their condition and reclaim good health