

## PEM Friends

Enables patients and their loved ones to share information and advice on how to manage their symptoms and to get emotional support.

We also raise awareness of PEM in the medical and research community and can help Health Care Professionals access information and support.

Enquiries and requests are all welcome and PEM Friends would be delighted to hear from anyone willing to provide support and share their experiences.



## Getting in touch

Read more in our magazine PEM Lives, available on our website: <https://www.pemfriends.org.uk/pem-lives-magazine>

We welcome any contacts via our website, our Facebook page or by e-mail at: [mail@pemfriends.org.uk](mailto:mail@pemfriends.org.uk)

Scan QR code for PEM Friends website:



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# Bullous Pemphigoid



Patient  
Information  
Leaflet



PEMPHIGUS AND PEMPFIGOID  
**PEM Friends**  
You are not alone

## What is Bullous Pemphigoid?

Bullous Pemphigoid (BP) is rare but numbers of diagnosed cases are increasing in the UK. It is an autoimmune blistering disorder that usually affects people of age 70 years and over. Blisters appear on the skin and, occasionally, inside the mouth. BP often starts with a red, itchy rash that looks a bit like eczema or hives and the itchiness can be almost unbearable. It can remain in that form but usually evolves into large painful blisters up to 5cm in diameter and filled with clear fluid, and sometimes blood. Blisters last a few days before healing without leaving a scar, but a cycle develops in which more form.

## How is Bullous Pemphigoid diagnosed?

The look of the rash, especially if blisters have formed, may be enough for your GP to make the diagnosis, but further investigations are usually performed including a blood test and skin biopsies. The skin biopsy is analysed for histology and direct immunofluorescence testing. Biopsies reveal the layers of skin that are affected.

## What are the symptoms of Bullous Pemphigoid?

The rash and blisters are usually seen on the upper arms and thighs, sometimes spreading to body folds and the abdomen (tummy) but can appear all over the body depending on the severity. BP can occasionally cause blistering in the mouth. Intense itching is also a symptom. BP blisters are firm and filled with a fluid. The fluid is usually clear but can be bloodstained. The blisters will gradually grow as they fill with fluid and then burst, often leaving raw skin which is very sore.

## Can Bullous Pemphigoid be cured?

BP cannot be cured but with the right treatment can be well controlled. However, sometimes it does spontaneously resolve itself after one to five years.



## How is Bullous Pemphigoid treated?

Treatment is with various medications, as well as aspiration and dressing of large blisters. This should be done very carefully by someone to ensure no infection is created. **Steroids** usually play a big part in treating BP. Steroids can be very effective but may have serious side effects which can be more severe in the elderly. Research suggests that Doxycycline (an antibiotic) can be an effective and less risky treatment than steroids. **Topical steroids** are also an important part of the therapy.

Information on how to treat BP wounds is available on our website. You can also see photos of blistering typical with BP on our Photo Library.

## For more information.

You can read more about BP in the British Association of Dermatologists Patient Information Leaflet or the Primary Care Dermatology Society Diagnostic pages.

The UK Centre of Evidence Based Dermatology investigates aspects of BP. You can find videos and information about their findings on their [website](#).