

Autoimmune blistering diseases are a group of disorders in which the body mistakenly attacks healthy tissue, causing blistering lesions that primarily affect the skin and mucous and membranes. In autoimmune blistering diseases, antibodies erroneously attack proteins that are essential for the layers of skin to stick (adhere) together. The specific symptoms and severity of blistering diseases vary from one person to another, even among individuals with the same disorder. In some cases, blistering lesions can cover a significant portion of the skin. Although there is no cure for autoimmune blistering diseases, they can often be controlled with treatment. In other cases, autoimmune blistering diseases if left untreated can eventually cause life-threatening complications. In recent years, new insight into the causes and development of these disorders has led to research into new therapies such as the development of drugs that target the specific antibodies which cause the symptoms of these diseases. NORD has individual reports on many of the specific disorders classified as autoimmune blistering diseases. For more information, choose the specific disease name as your search term in the Rare Disease Database. Autoimmune blistering diseases affect men and women in equal numbers. Most forms occur in middle-aged individuals, usually people in their 50s and 60s. However, autoimmune blistering diseases can affect individuals of any age including children. The overall incidence and prevalence of pemphigus varies depending upon the specific population studied. Pemphigus is estimated to affect anywhere from 0.7-5 people per 1,000,000 per year in the general population (Israel has the highest incidence at 16 per 1,000,000 per year). The incidence of dermatitis herpetiformis has been estimated at 10 in 100,000. The exact incidence of epidermolysis bullosa acquisita and the pemphigoid disorders is unknown.