

Pyoderma gangrenosum (PG) is an inflammatory skin disorder that is characterized by small, red bumps or blisters (papules or nodules) that eventually erode to form swollen open sores (ulcerations). The size and depth of the ulcerations vary greatly, and they are often extremely painful. In approximately 50 percent of cases, PG occurs secondary to another disorder such as inflammatory bowel disease. The exact cause of PG is unknown (idiopathic). Some researchers believe it may be an autoimmune disorder. Pyoderma gangrenosum affects women slightly more often than men. It occurs most often between the ages of 20 to 50 years. Infants or adolescents account for fewer than 4 percent of cases. One estimate places the incidence of PG at 1 in every 100,000 people in the United States. No specific diagnostic tests exist for pyoderma gangrenosum. Diagnosis is made by excluding similar disorders based upon a thorough clinical evaluation, a detailed patient history and a variety of tests such as surgical removal and microscopic evaluation of affected tissue (biopsy).