

## REVIEW ARTICLE

## Dermatillomania

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## ABSTRACT

Excoriation or skin picking disorder or Dermatillomania is a Mental disorder associated with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

It occurs at the age of 13 onwards till any age with two types Automatic and focused. It caused by various reasons like Genetics, Anatomical alteration, stress, anxiety, tension and introspection. There are many signs and symptoms in that few are Grasping, Excavating, Pulling and Scratching. We can diagnose this with Physical Examination, Health History, Current Situation and Diagnostic evaluation. Criteria can be used to diagnose Dermatillomania are Ongoing or recurrent skin picking, Attempts to stop or reduce the behavior, Feelings of shame, embarrassment, or other negative emotions related to skin picking that interfere with work and social interactions, Non-medical conditions or drug side effects as the reason for skin picking, Absence of other mental health conditions. There is a possibility to treat this condition with Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Habit reversal therapy, Acceptance and Commitment therapy, Anti depressants, Anti Psychotics and Nutraceuticals.

Physician can help to pinpoint the causes of skin-picking behavior and modify behavior in ways that will enhance quality of life. If they get help, most people are able to resist the need to pick at their skin.

## KEYWORDS

• Dermatillomania • Skin picking disorder • Skin-picking behavior • Excoriation

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## INTRODUCTION

Excoriation disorder (also referred to as chronic skin-picking or Dermatillomania) is a mental illness related to obsessive-compulsive disorder. Dermatillomania is a mental health condition where a person compulsively picks or scratches their skin, causing injuries or scarring. Also known as excoriation disorder or skin-picking disorder, this condition falls under the category of obsessive-compulsive disorders (OCDs). When it leads to significant scarring and injuries, this condition can severely affect a person's mental health, well-being and quality of life.<sup>1</sup>

### Meaning:

This condition (Pronounced *derm-ah-till-oh-main-ee-ah*) gets its name from three Greek words: *Derma*: Skin

*Tillo*: Pulling (or picking)

*Mania*: Excessive behavior or activity.<sup>2</sup>

### Definition

Picking the skin excessively and frequently, it can lead to harm and scarring. This condition is known as skin picking disorder. Other names for it include neurotic excoriation, psychogenic excoriation, Dermatillomania, and pathological skin picking.<sup>3</sup>

Dermatillomania is defined as an impulse or drive that is impossible or extremely difficult to ignore.<sup>4</sup>

### Incidence:

- Skin picking, also known as body-focused repetitive behavior (BFRB),
- Usually starts in adolescents, usually around the age of 13 to 15, either before or after the onset of puberty.
- It can also happen in children or adults.
- Between 1.4 and 5.4% of adult Americans suffer from the illness, with women being affected more frequently than males.
- With an estimated 2% of people having it at any given moment and up to 5.4% of people having it at some point in their lives, Dermatillomania is a rare disorder.<sup>5</sup>

### Types of picking

#### Automatic:

It is common for this type of picking to occur unconsciously. This is commonly referred to by

experts as “scanning” because it usually entails rubbing hands or fingertips over different parts of the skin to identify any regions that feel different. These areas may then be selected with precision.<sup>6</sup>

#### Focused

Picking in this type of context is “focused on a specific area and can last for hours.” This type of picking is more likely to harm your skin because it is usually more intense.<sup>7</sup>

#### Causes

As of right now, excoriation disorder has no known cause. Evidence, however, points to a number of potential variables that could affect how this illness develops, including:

- **Genetics:** People with Dermatillomania are more likely to have a parent or sibling who is a first-degree relative who also has the disorder.
- **Anatomical alterations:** People with excoriation disease are more likely to have a few significant structural variations in the brain regions that govern learning and habit formation.
- Anxiety, tension, or other ailments. Picking at skin could be a coping mechanism for various mental health issues. It might also have to do with boredom or other things.
- Differentiations in brain anatomy;
- Stress, anxiety, or other conditions are some potential causes of SPD.
- Introspection<sup>8</sup>

#### Signs and Symptoms:

- A person with dermatillomania will pick at their skin obsessively.
- Picking may come naturally to certain people, who may not even be aware that they are doing it.
- Some people know they are doing it, yet they are unable to stop.
- People may pick at benign lesions such as blisters, scabs, open wounds, and small skin imperfections like calluses or pimples. Usually chronic in nature, this illness alternates times of no picking with periods of increased symptom intensity.
- Picking is concentrated on rough or pre-existing blemished or uneven parts of the

skin. Scabbed over cuts and scratches, dry skin patches, and pimples are a few examples (those wounds can arise from picking or from other causes).

- Picking can cause bleeding and scarring by opening previously closed wounds or creating new ones. Severe cases of this illness may result in skin damage.
- The primary sign of dermatillomania is compulsive skin picking. Experts also use the following terms to characterize the act of skin picking:  
Grasping; Excavating; Pulling; Scratching.
- In addition to using fingertips and fingernails, picking can also involve biting teeth, particularly if the affected area of skin is lips. Additionally, sharp objects like pins or tweezers may be involved.
- The sections of your body that are easiest for hands to reach, like face (the most common location), scapula, and neck, are the areas most commonly damaged by skin picking. Hands, fingers, forearms, foot, toes, calves, and thighs.<sup>9</sup>

#### Effects on Mental Health:

- Feel uncomfortable or humiliated by the apparent wounds.
- Make an effort to cover them up with makeup, clothes, or other accessories.
- As a result, this illness may contribute to social isolation, anxiety, or sadness. People's social and professional life may also be impacted by this illness.<sup>10</sup>

#### Diagnosis of Dermatillomania:

- A physical examination to check for symptoms.
- Inquiries concerning health history, current situation, and any potentially relevant activities.
- Diagnostic testing to help rule out alternative explanations for illness.<sup>11</sup>

#### The following criteria can be used to diagnose Dermatillomania:

- Ongoing or recurrent skin picking.
- Attempts to stop or reduce the behavior.
- Feelings of shame, embarrassment, or other negative emotions related to skin

picking that interfere with work and social interactions.

- Non-medical conditions or drug side effects as the reason for skin picking.
- Absence of other mental health conditions.<sup>12</sup>

#### Treatment

Cognitive behavioral therapy and medication are typically used to treat skin picking condition.

#### Most beneficial medications are:

Antidepressants:

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs).

Fluvoxamine (Luvox, Faverin)

Citalopram (Celexa)

Fluoxetine (Prozac)

Sertraline (Zoloft) are SSRIs that have been evaluated in individuals with dermatillomania.

Lamotrigine is one anticonvulsant medication that helps you regulate your muscular contractions.

- **Antipsychotics:** Aid in the homeostasis of brain neurotransmitters.
- **Nutraceuticals:** Functional foods and supplements are examples of nutraceuticals. One that might lessen your impulse to pick at your skin is N-acetylcysteine.<sup>13</sup>

A variety of therapeutic modalities may be beneficial, such as:

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy:** Which teaches coping mechanisms to assist in behavior modification.
- **Habit reversal therapy:** It aims to overcome negative habits by raising awareness of actions. For example, Therapist can assist in discovering alternative hand activities, like squeezing a rubber ball, that can help to decompress and pass the time.
- Peer assistance and group counseling.

#### Acceptance and commitment therapy:

This therapy teaches healthy coping strategies and assists in accepting unpleasant feelings.<sup>14</sup>

### Complications:

- Ulcerations and infections (including scabs and scars)
- Scars and deformity
- Loss of blood
- Bacterial blood poisoning<sup>15</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Dermatillomania is the term used to describe excessive skin picking, often to the point of injury and scarring. This may make the individual to feel bad, degraded, or ashamed. Physician can help to pinpoint the causes of skin-picking behavior and modify behavior in ways that will enhance quality of life. If they get help, most people are able to resist the need to pick at their skin.

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