

WHAT IS EXCORIATION DISORDER?

Insanity is knowing that what you're doing is completely idiotic, but still, somehow, you just can't stop it...Elizabeth Wurtzel

WHAT TO KNOW!

- ❖ Excoriation disorder or dermatillomania is often referred to as compulsive skin-picking
- ❖ It is common among people who have obsessive-compulsive disorder and mood disorders as well as people on the Autism Spectrum
- ❖ Prevalence estimates vary from 1.4% to 5.4% in the general population and is much more common in females
- ❖ It involves repetitive picking, scratching, pulling, poking, squeezing, twisting, or tearing of skin blemishes or marks in an attempt to remove imperfections
- ❖ It can start with an irresistible urge to scratch, often brought on by anxiety or stress, which provides some relief but the scabbing compels further picking
- ❖ Excessive scratching can leave lesions that look like long abrasions in the skin
- ❖ Individuals with excoriation disorder can pick at normal skin variations such as freckles, moles, scabs, sores, and other skin defects
- ❖ Instruments used to pick include fingernails, tweezers, teeth, razor blades, and pins
- ❖ The most commonly picked area is the face although the arms, legs, back, gums, lips, shoulders, scalp, fingernails, toenails, and cuticles are other common areas
- ❖ Medical conditions that can cause scratching and skin picking include eczema, psoriasis, diabetes, and lupus which need to be ruled out for a diagnosis of excoriation
- ❖ In addition to physical damage to the skin, secondary effects include embarrassment, impaired social functioning, strained relationships, low self esteem, and isolation
- ❖ Excoriation Disorder has a high rate of co-occurrence with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, obsessive-compulsive disorder and body dysmorphic disorder
- ❖ Excoriation is often thought to be a coping mechanism used to deal with high levels of stress and anxiety in people who have no other effective means of coping
- ❖ People with excoriation disorder often go into a trance-like state where they become obsessed with their real or imagined skin imperfections
- ❖ Excoriation behavior can become so conditioned that people often don't realize they are picking while participating in another activity until they see blood on their fingers
- ❖ Treatments include medications, cognitive behavior therapy, habit reversal therapy, mindfulness therapy, and group therapy
- ❖ Excoriation Disorder is now included in the DSM V; the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, and is recognized as a controversial diagnosis

WHAT TO DO!

- ❖ If you pick, keep your hands busy with another activity when you feel the urge to pick and try to distract yourself
- ❖ Try to hold off the urge for as long as you can and the urge may pass
- ❖ Use lotions and crèmes to keep your skin moist and smooth
- ❖ Use anti-bacterial soap or an antiseptic cleanser to keep your skin free from blemishes
- ❖ Practice relaxation exercises and positive self-talk
- ❖ Throw out all tools including tweezers and razors that may be used for skin picking
- ❖ Consult a dermatologist for medical treatment
- ❖ Seek professional help if you are unable to stop picking your skin as speaking with a cognitive behavioral therapist can be extremely helpful

WE CAN HELP!

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at DrKimmel@KimmelPsychology.com

Joel I. Kimmel, Ph.D. P.A. and Associates
5571 N University Drive, Suite 101
Coral Springs FL 33067