



OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE AND RELATED DISORDERS EXCORIATION (SKIN-PICKING DISORDER)

What it is:

Excoriation, or skin picking disorder, is a disorder in which an individual repeatedly picks at their own skin. The skin picking can be from areas such as the face, arms and hands, but it can include multiple body areas. The individual may pick at healthy skin, or at pimples, lesions, or scabs from previous picking. The skin picking can be done with the individual's fingernails, but it can also be done with objects such as tweezers, pins or other objects. The individual may also bite, squeeze or rub the skin. This picking behaviour typically takes up a significant amount of time out of the individual's day, sometimes up to several hours. The majority of individuals with this disorder spend at least 1 hour per day picking their skin, thinking about picking or resisting the urge to pick.

Skin lesions usually form as a result of the picking, although the individual may try to disguise this with make up or clothing. Individuals with this disorder may feel loss of control, shame or embarrassment as a result of the skin picking, and this impact negatively on their functionality at home, school or work. In severe cases, skin picking can lead to tissue damage, scarring or even infection.

Common symptoms:

1. Repeated picking of the skin which results in scabs or lesions
2. Repeated attempts to stop skin picking
3. The skin picking causes impairment in functionality in the individuals life at home, school or work

Causes:

Research has shown that there may be genetic as well as physiological factors that contribute to the development of excoriation. The disorder is more common in individuals with obsessive-compulsive disorder, and in their first degree relatives.