



## **Blisters Treatment and Prevention**

### **Causes of Blisters**

Blisters form when the skin rubs against another surface, causing friction. First, a tear occurs within the upper layers of the skin forming a space between the layers while leaving the surface intact. Then fluid seeps into the space. Blisters form more easily on moist skin than on dry or soaked skin, and warm conditions assist blister formation.

### **Treating Blisters**

Caring for a blister before the skin has broken. If you get a blister, the goal is to want to relieve pain, keep the blister from enlarging, and avoid infection. A blister should not be contaminated by cutting or puncturing but should be protected from further insult. Small, intact blisters that don't cause discomfort usually need no treatment. The best protection against infection is a blister's own skin. Protect the blister area by using a doughnut pad around the irritated skin.

Larger or painful blisters that are intact should be drained without removing the skin. First clean the blister with rubbing alcohol or antibiotic soap and water. Then heat a straight pin or safety pin over a flame until the pin glows red, and allow it to cool before puncturing a small hole at the edge of the blister. Drain the fluid with gentle pressure, and then apply an antibiotic ointment. The opening should be small, 1/8 inch or less, but wide enough to release the fluid and prevent the blister from sealing again. Immediately clean and cover the blister. The blister must be protected using a doughnut pad. When tenderness has subsided in about 5 to 6 days, the loose skin may be cut away. Care should be taken to keep the underlying skin clean and protected.

### **Caring for a blister after the skin has broken**

Cleanse the blister and surrounding area with soap and water; then rinse with an antiseptic. Using sterile scissors, cut the torn blister halfway around its perimeter. Apply antiseptic and a mild ointment such as zinc oxide to the exposed skin. Lay the flap back over the ointment area and cover the entire area with a sterile dressing. Within 2 to 3 days, or when the underlying skin has hardened sufficiently, remove the dead skin. Continued use of the doughnut pad to protect the "new skin" is usually required.

### **Prevention of Blisters**

To prevent blisters, you need to minimize friction. For the feet, this begins with appropriate shoe and sock selection. Make sure your shoes are the right size and shape. Wear socks made from wicking synthetic blends or merino wool. Before you exercise, apply Body Glide or Blister Shield to reduce friction.

If a friction area, "hot spot" does develop, treatment at this time should be aimed at reducing the pressure / friction over the localized red and tender skin. This can be accomplished by surrounding the area with a doughnut pad or by covering the area with a material that will bear the brunt of the friction. Second Skin blister pads work well. When a full blown blister is present special care must be taken. One should be aware at all times of the possibility of severe infection from contamination. Whenever a blister appears to be infected it requires medical attention.

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