

Dermatological Terminology

- **Primary Skin Lesion Terminology**

- **Macule**- Flat discoloration less than 1cm; confined to the epidermis
- **Patch**- Flat discoloration greater than 1 cm; confined to the epidermis
- **Papule**- Elevated, solid lesion up to 1 cm; involves epidermis & superior dermis
- **Plaque**- Elevated, solid lesion greater than 1 cm; involves epidermis & superior dermis
- **Nodule**- Deep, large papule, that extends to mid-dermis & subcutaneous tissues
- **Pustule**- collection of pus (leukocytes & free fluid)
- **Vesicle**- “blister”, fluid-filled papule less than 1cm
- **Bulla**- fluid-filled papule greater than 1 cm
- **Wheal**- firm edematous plaque due to fluid in the dermis

- **Secondary Skin Lesion Terminology**

- **Scale**- excess dead epidermis due to abnormal keratinization & shedding
- **Crust**- collection of dried serum or cellular debris (“a scab”)
- **Erosion**- focal loss of epidermis- heals without scarring
- **Ulcer**- focal loss of epidermis & dermis- heals with scarring
- **Atrophy**- depression of skin from thinning of the epidermis &/or dermis
- **Fissure**- linear loss of epidermis & dermis with a sharply defined vertical wall (“cracked skin”)
- **Scar (cicatrix)**- abnormal formation of connection tissue due to dermal damage- initially scars tend to be thick and pink/red in color but over time become atrophic and white

- **Distribution Terminology**

- **Localized**- limited to certain areas of the body
- **Generalized**- widespread (opposite of localized)
- **Acral**- localized to appendage (fingertips, knuckles, elbows, knees, buttocks, toes, heels, or ears)
- **Extensor**- over the extensor surfaces of limbs
- **Flexural**- over the flexor surface (intertriginous)
- **Dermatomal**- lesions follow the distribution of skin innervation by cutaneous branches of a single spinal nerve
- **Photodistribution**- areas of the skin exposed to the sun (face, dorsum of hands & forearms, and neck & upper chest)
- **Symmetric**- affecting the same regions on both the right & left sides of the body
- **Asymmetric**- affecting only one side of the body
- **Linear**- lesions distributed along or resembling a line
- **Grouped**- lesions that cluster together (may also be called “clustered”)
- **Reticular**- lesions in a net-like arrangement



• Shapes of Skin Lesions

- **Circumscribed**- round
- **Annular**- ring-like configuration
- **Serpiginous**- wavy or serpent-like shape
- **Targetoid**- central erythematous lesion with surrounding area of pale edema & peripheral erythema
- **Discoid**- resembling a disk.
- **Arcuate**- half-moon-shaped
- **Polygonal**- varied non-geometric shape
- **Polymorphic**- varied shape
- **Acuminate**- pointed
- **Filiform**- thread-like
- **Pedunculated**- with a stalk
- **Sessile**- without a stalk
- **Umbilicated**- lesion with a central depression
- **Verrucous**- warty

• Pigmentation Terminology

- **Erythema**- blanchable redness caused by dilation of superficial blood vessels and capillaries
- **Violaceous**- violet/purple hue; typically inflammatory diseases located at the dermal-epidermal junction
- **Hyperpigmentation**- darker than normal color/increased melanin.
- **Hypopigmentation**- paler than normal/decreased melanin
- **Necrotic/infarcted**- blackened, dying or dead tissue
- **Jaundice**- yellow discoloration of skin due to excess bilirubin

• Other Terminology

- **Rash**- widespread eruption of multiple lesions
- **Exanthem**: widespread rash
- **Blanchable**- rash/eruption that loses its color when pressure is applied (Diascopy test)
- **Demarcated**- lesion with well-defined borders
- **Confluent**- lesions flowing or running together
- **Diffuse**- sporadic/spread over an area
- **Maculopapular**- eruption with both macules & papules
- **Papulosquamous**- eruption with both papules/plaques & scales
- **Desquamation**- shedding of stratum corneum typically following a rash
- **Excoriation**- erosion caused by scratching
- **Burrow**- narrow, elevated channel produced by a parasite
- **Lichenification**- an area of thickened epidermis due to scratching
- **Telangiectasia**- dilated superficial blood vessels
- **Petechiae**- deposit of blood less than 2mm
- **Purpura**- deposit of 2mm to 1cm
- **Ecchymosis**- deposit of blood greater than 1cm ("bruise")
- **Maceration**- Softening or disintegration of tissues following prolonged wetting, eroded stratum corneum

