Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (SJS) and toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN) are caused by a reaction of the body's own immune system.

Both SJS and TEN are hypersensitivity reactions, which means that the immune system reacts in a way that harms the body. The damage is primarily to the body surfaces, with painful red spots and blisters forming on the skin, eyes, mouth, genitals, and airways. Internal organs such as the liver, lungs, and kidneys may also be injured. The skin damage in SJS is less widespread than in TEN. In adults, the trigger is usually a medication. If the medication is taken again, the reaction may happen again. Both SJS and TEN can be fatal, and scarring may cause permanent damage to the eyes or genitals.

**Symptoms**
Fever is often the first symptom. A sore throat, cough, red eyes, and tender, pink skin are early symptoms. A red rash appears, and some areas blister. Blisters on the lips and in the mouth break, leaving sores that make it painful to eat, drink, and swallow. The eyes often feel scratchy, gritty, and dry. The vagina and penis can blister, and damaged skin in these sites may be overlooked if not pointed out to doctors.

As the skin heals, it may look darker or lighter than before. Hair and nails may fall out and regrow differently. The vagina and penis can be permanently scarred. The eyes may remain dry, and some vision may be lost. The mouth may be scarred and dry, leading to tooth decay.

**Diagnosis**
Doctors will ask questions, inspect your skin, take blood, and often do a skin biopsy.

**Treatment**
Even if only a small area of skin blisters, it is important to be treated in a hospital. If a large area of skin is affected an intensive care unit or burn unit with experience treating this disease is recommended.

Doctors may use intravenous immunoglobulin (a mix of proteins purified from blood), cyclosporine, steroids, and/or other medications to try to halt the reaction; however, no medications are proven to slow or stop the reaction or make healing faster. Usually a combination of careful wound care to any open skin or sores, constant eye, mouth, and genital care, and intensive general medical support is required.

**Avoid Reexposure**
It is important to find out what triggered your reaction. Consider wearing a medical alert bracelet to let people know which medication caused your reaction so that you can avoid taking it and any related drugs in the future. Occasionally these reactions have a known genetic component, and genetic testing can identify other family members who might be at risk.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**
- Stevens-Johnson Foundation
  http://sjsupport.org/
- Stevens-Johnson Syndrome
  http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/stevens-johnson-syndrome/home/ovc-20317097

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