



What is hidradenitis suppurativa (HS)?

Hidradenitis suppurativa is a condition where chronic (long term) inflammation (painful swelling and irritation) develops in the skin. It typically begins after puberty and usually starts as pimple-like bumps. HS affects about 1-4% of the general population, women more than men. An older name for this condition is acne inversa.

The cause of HS is not well understood, how your HS develops and advances could be from many factors:

- Genetic (inherited from your parents)
- Hormonal
- Bacterial
- Immune system
- Environmental

HS is not contagious. It is not related to personal hygiene or deodorant use.

What are the symptoms?

HS can look like pimples, blackheads, infected hair follicles, or boils.

It typically causes painful, deep, swollen lesions (irritated tissue under the skin) that can result in abscesses, which are similar to pimples. These areas can enlarge and break open, causing drainage of blood or pus. In advanced stages this can lead to scarring, disfigurement, and disability.

The lesions tend to occur in areas of the skin containing sweat glands. The areas of the body that are most commonly affected are:

- The armpits
- Under the breasts
- The groin (where the thigh meets the abdomen)
- The vulva (external female genital organs, including the clitoris, vaginal lips, and the opening to the vagina)
- The buttocks

How is it treated?

Identifying and treating HS early can prevent it from worsening. The goal of treatment is to slow the disease progression and to decrease the symptoms. *Currently there is no cure for hidradenitis suppurativa.*

There are 3 stages of the disease, which help guide treatment:

1. Stage 1: Limited to a small single lesion or multiple lesions without scarring.
 - Treatment: antibiotic ointment, oral antibiotics, or oral contraceptives (birth control) with hormones that block acne.

2. Stage 2: More than one widely-separated, frequent lesions with scarring.
 - Treatment: antibiotic ointment, oral antibiotics, oral contraceptives with hormones that block acne, or steroid shot into the lesion.
 - Surgery or targeted therapy (specific drugs used to treat the factors causing your condition) are sometimes recommended.

3. Stage 3: Widespread disease with many interconnected lesions.
 - Treatment: The same medical treatments as seen in Stage 1 and Stage 2 with the addition of surgery. Your surgeon will decide which surgery fits you based on what stage you are in.

What is my risk of developing stage 3?

On average

- 55-70 out of 100 (55-70%) patients stay in stage 1
- 28 out of 100 (28%) progress to stage 2
- 4-7 out of 100 (4-7%) patients progress to stage 3

Preventive treatments, regardless of the stage:

- Zinc picolinate 30 mg with copper 2 mg twice day
- Vitamin C 500 mg three times day
- Vitamin D3 2000-5000 IU are used daily.
- If appropriate oral contraceptives (Yaz or Yasmin) with the hormone drospirenone have been shown to help.

How can I prevent HS?

- Decrease injury, friction, heat, and sweating to the area
- Wear loose fitting clothing, cotton underwear or loose boxer style underwear
- Avoid any pads
- Lose weight (ask your doctor)
- Start a zero dairy with low glycemic load diet (ask your doctor)
- Stop smoking and stop all nicotine products
- If possible, get laser hair removal
- Use antibacterial soap

Additional Resource:

www.hs-foundation.org

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