

HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA

WHAT IT IS

Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) is a chronic, painful skin condition which is thought to be related to a genetic weakness in the wall of hair follicles in the skin. It often presents with blackheads, pimples, boils, abscesses, scars and tunnels in the armpits, underneath the breasts, groin, inner thighs and/or buttocks. Occasionally, HS lesions can appear on the abdomen, the back of the neck, the chest, the back and behind the ears.

CAUSES

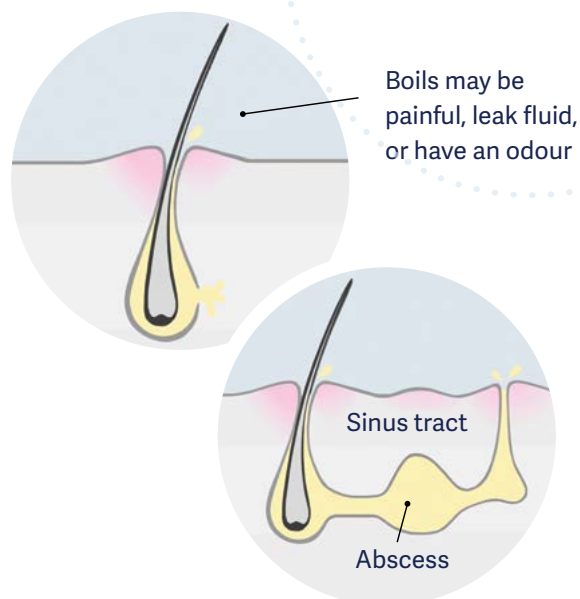
- Abnormal structure of skin cells that line the hair follicles causes oil and dead skin cells to build up in the hair follicle. The hair follicle is weaker than normal and more prone to rupturing.
- Hormonal influence as increased oil production increases clogging of the hair follicles.
- Buildup of oil and dead skin cells causes rupturing of the hair follicle, and this leads to inflammation of the surrounding skin, which causes boils.
- Over time, inflammation can cause tunneling of skin that extends past the initial boil. This can lead to scarring and development of sinus tracts (tunnels that form underneath the skin), which can drain fluid.

RISK FACTORS

The exact cause of HS is not known, but many biological, medical and environmental factors may play a role in its development, including genetics, lifestyle habits, age, sex and other medical conditions.



Fifty to 300 million people around the world, and 300,000 to more than 1 million people in Canada, have HS.



TRIGGERS

Various factors can trigger or worsen HS flares, including exercise-related friction and sweating, hot and humid weather, tight-fitting clothing, weight gain, alcohol consumption, smoking, physical injury, menstrual cycle fluctuations, changes in medication and stress.

IMPACT

HS can significantly impact your quality of life, causing social isolation, sleep disturbance and discomfort in daily activities. The visible signs of HS can be upsetting. You may have large lesions on your skin, and sometimes they can produce an unpleasant odour. This can lead to emotional distress and worry, along with the pain these lesions may cause.

PAIN MANAGEMENT AND WOUND CARE

If a painful nodule appears, gently applying a wet, warm compress can help reduce swelling and ease pain. Ice packs and over-the-counter options can be effective for mild pain.

There is not one common wound care regimen for HS, so be sure to speak to your doctor or Certified Dermatologist about the right plan for you. What you use to care for your wounds can vary. Your dermatologist will consider where you have wounds, the amount of leakage, what the skin around each wound looks like, cost, and your preferences.

TREATMENT

HS can usually be controlled with a combination of medical and surgical therapies.

GENERAL MEASURES

- Wear loose-fitting, moisture-wicking, absorbent fabrics
- Avoid picking/squeezing/rubbing the lesions
- Consider weight loss strategies
- Quit smoking
- Adopt a low sugar/refined carbohydrate diet, avoid products that contain skim milk and whey or casein protein

MEDICAL, SURGICAL AND LASER TREATMENT

- Topical Antibiotics
- Topical Resorcinol (15% cream)
- Zinc Supplement
- Hormonal Therapies (oral contraceptive, Spironolactone, Metformin)
- Oral Antibiotics
- Biologics
- Laser Hair Removal
- Intralesional Corticosteroid Injections
- Botulinum Toxin Injections
- Deroofing Surgery

TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

- 1 **HS is not an infectious or contagious disease, and it is not caused by poor hygiene.**
- 2 **There is a lot of research on new treatments for HS. Your doctor or Certified Dermatologist is here to help!**



Additional information on Hidradenitis Suppurativa is available online.

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All content for this brochure was developed independently by Canadian Certified Dermatologists.