ARE YOU LIVING WITH HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA (HS)?

Here is what you need to know, and how you can find out.

WHAT IS HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA (HS)?

HS is a painful skin disease that can be identified by:

1. The types of lesion it creates on the skin:
   - Nodules (hard lumps under the skin)
   - Abscesses (pus surrounded by swollen skin)
   - Sinus tracts/fistulas (a passage that links two or more lesions together)

2. Recurrence (a return of lesions after they disappear)

3. Location of lesions in parts of the body where skin tends to rub together, and where specialized sweat glands called apocrine glands are found:
   - On and around the breasts
   - In the armpits (one of the most commonly affected areas)
   - Between the buttocks (has the most negative impact when affected)
   - In the groin (another commonly affected area)

HS may be due to defects within the hair follicle.

Hair follicle: A cavity where hair grows out of the skin.

Can increase the risk of HS:
- Since HS occurs after puberty, sex hormones likely play a role.
- Smokers have greater odds of developing HS than non-smokers or ex-smokers.
- Researchers have found a link between HS and obesity.

Diagnosed by a doctor 5–8 years after it starts.

Historically, there has been low awareness of HS and its symptoms among doctors due to low prevalence of the disease.

A dermatologist is trained to know the difference between skin conditions.

1% occurrence in the population (how many people are affected).

22 years average age when HS first appears.

Women for every man.

Excess weight.

Diagnosed by a doctor 5–8 years after it starts.

62% of people with HS are diagnosed by a dermatologist.

Who usually develops HS?

- Smokers have greater odds of developing HS than non-smokers or ex-smokers.
- Researchers have found a link between HS and obesity.

Rupture.
**WHAT HS IS NOT**

- It is not an infection, or caused by an infection
- It is not a series of ordinary sores, cysts or boils
- It is not a type of severe acne
- It is not contagious
- It is not caused by poor hygiene

**HOW IS HS DIAGNOSED?**

The diagnosis of HS and its severity is clinically assessed – there are no lab tests to do this. Disease severity is assessed with consideration of multiple factors including lesion type(s), lesion count, scarring, pain, previous treatment failures, physical and psychological impact and other impact on quality of life.

While there is no single scale that captures all these aspects, several different scales may be used by physicians in these assessments.

**WHAT CAUSES HS?**

The exact cause of HS is unknown. However, research shows that HS occurs when the body is attacked by its own immune system. This is why HS is called an immune-mediated disorder: even though it causes painful symptoms on the surface of the skin, its effects are more than skin deep.

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE COMMONLY REPORTED SYMPTOMS OF HS?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Percentage of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pain/Burning</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Movement</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pus or Drainage</td>
<td>43%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Based on hospital charts of patients with HS.

**WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE HS?**

If you think that you may have hidradenitis suppurativa, it makes sense to consult a dermatologist – a doctor who specializes in diseases of the skin. A dermatologist will be able to give you a diagnosis, advise you on how to live with the symptoms you have, and recommend the most appropriate treatment for you.