

HIDRANDENITIS SUPPURATIVA

Hidrandenitis Suppurativa (HS) is considered a severe form of acne. It is marked by blackheads and red, tender bumps, deep in the skin around oil glands and hair follicles. The parts of the body that may be affected are: the groin, armpits, anal area, inner thighs, lower abdomen, and under the breasts. The lesions may enlarge, form sinus tracts, break open and drain pus. Scarring may result. HS generally starts between puberty and age 40, persists for years, and worsens over time. A 2008 French study in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* revealed that 1 % of people in the general population have HS. Sometimes HS runs in families.

What can you do to improve Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS)?

- 1) If you're a smoker, STOP! In a large study, smoking was shown to be positively correlated with the occurrence of HS.
- 2) If you carry excess weight, do what you can to lose weight. Being overweight is also positively correlated with the occurrence of HS. Excess weight increases the number of areas where skin rubs together – for example, between skin folds – causing friction, increased perspiration and bacterial growth. Though weight loss may not cure the disease, it can improve symptoms.
- 3) Wash the affected areas with chlorhexidine (Hibiclens) antibacterial soap daily. Chlorhexidine is available over the counter, but you may have to ask the pharmacist for it if you don't see it on the store shelf. Chlorhexidine is the same antibacterial soap that surgeons use to "scrub in" before performing surgery. Just don't get in your eyes or ears since it can damage those sensitive tissues.
- 4) Wear loose- fitting clothing and underwear to prevent skin irritation.
- 5) For painful swelling, apply warm compresses at home.
- 6) For females of child-bearing age, discuss with your gynecologist starting a birth control pill such as Yaz or Yasmin as a means of controlling hormones, which then helps control HS.

What can your dermatologist do to help improve your condition?

- 1) For painful nodules in the skin, your doctor may:
 - Perform incision and drainage.
 - Inject cortisone called triamcinolone to calm down the inflammation.
- 2) You may get a prescription for:
 - A topical antibiotic to apply directly to the affected areas 2 x per day.
 - An oral antibiotic to take for a brief 1-2 week course, or take long-term as a preventive measure.
- 3) For the most resistant, severe cases, patients may be referred to a plastic surgeon as a last resort to consider surgically excising the problem skin areas and cover them with skin grafts.