



Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS)

What is Hidradenitis Suppurativa?

Hidradenitis Suppurativa, also known as **acne inversa**, is a long-term inflammatory skin condition characterized by painful lumps under the skin. These typically develop in areas where skin rubs together, such as the armpits, groin, buttocks, and under the breasts.

Key Symptoms

- **Painful Lumps:** Red, tender bumps that may enlarge, break open, and drain pus.
- **Tunnels (Sinus Tracts):** Over time, tracts may form under the skin connecting the lumps.
- **Scarring:** Chronic flare-ups can lead to thick, rope-like scars and skin thickening.
- **Blackheads:** Small, pitted areas of skin containing blackheads, often appearing in pairs.

Causes and Risk Factors

The exact cause of HS is unknown, but it is primarily linked to **blockages in the hair follicles**. It is an inflammatory disorder, not the result of poor hygiene, and it is **not contagious**.

- **Genetics:** Approximately one-third of people with HS have a family history of the condition.
- **Hormones:** Flares often begin after puberty and can be influenced by hormonal cycles.
- **Lifestyle Factors:** Smoking and obesity are strongly linked to increased severity of flares.
- **Immune System:** An overactive immune response plays a significant role in the inflammation.

Hurley Staging System

Physicians categorize the severity of HS using the Hurley Scale:

Stage	Description
Stage I	Single or multiple abscesses without tunneling or scarring.
Stage II	Recurrent abscesses with sinus tracts (tunnels) and scarring; widely separated.
Stage III	Widespread involvement with multiple interconnected tunnels and extensive scarring.

Management and Treatment

While there is no permanent cure, HS can be managed effectively with early intervention to reduce pain and prevent progression.

Medical Treatments

- **Topical & Oral Antibiotics:** To manage inflammation and secondary infections.
- **Biologics:** Medications that target the immune system (e.g., Adalimumab) for moderate to severe cases.
- **Corticosteroids:** Injections directly into a lesion to reduce swelling and pain.
- **Hormonal Therapy:** Certain medications may help balance hormones that trigger flares.

Procedures

- **Incision and Drainage:** Short-term relief for acute, painful abscesses.
- **Deroofing:** A surgical technique to "uncover" tunnels and allow them to heal from the inside out.
- **Excision:** Surgical removal of the affected skin area in severe cases.

Self-Care and Lifestyle

- **Weight Management:** Reducing body weight can decrease skin-on-skin friction.
- **Smoking Cessation:** Stopping smoking is one of the most effective ways to reduce flare frequency.
- **Loose Clothing:** Wear breathable fabrics like cotton to minimize irritation.

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