



3 Mahoney Ave.
(802) 773-3553
www.rutlandskin.com
Daniel P. McCauliffe, M.D.

Hidradenitis suppurativa

What is hidradenitis suppurativa?

Hidradenitis suppurativa is an uncommon disorder where tender boil-like lumps develop in the underarms, groin, buttocks, under the breasts, and less commonly elsewhere. These lumps can be very painful, drain pus, and leave scars in the skin. This condition is sometimes associated with cystic acne. It is more common in women and being overweight may predispose to this condition. Hot environments and excessive perspiration may aggravate this skin disorder. It usually begins in the teenage years or in early adulthood, and gradually subsides over the next one to three decades. It is sometimes associated with thyroid disease, bowel disorders, arthritis, and other conditions.

How is it treated?

Treatment is aimed at treating bacterial infections, injecting or draining boils, and keeping the affected areas dry.

Treatments of hidradenitis suppurativa include:

- 1) Daily bathing with an antibacterial soap (e.g., Hibiclens, Dial, Lever 2000, PanOxyl).
- 2) Use of topical antibiotics (e.g., clindamycin, mupirocin, erythromycin) and (or) antibiotic pills (e.g., tetracycline, minocycline, doxycycline, cephalexin, erythromycin, metronidazole, dicloxacillin, ciprofloxacin).
- 3) Use of other anti-acne type medications such as tretinoin (Retin-A), adapalene (Differin), tazarotene (Tazorac), benzoyl peroxide, and isotretinoin [Accutane].
- 4) Swollen tender bumps can be treated with corticosteroid injections.
- 5) Abscesses are surgically drained.
- 6) Surgical excision of large areas of involved skin is rarely considered.
- 7) Hormonal treatment (i.e., birth control pills [e.g., Diane-35 or Estelle 35, which contain moderate oestrogen and cyproterone acetate]) can sometimes be beneficial in women.
- 8) Patients should wear loose fitting clothing to avoid chafing.
- 9) Underclothing made of wicking fabric can help keep the skin dryer. This fabric wicks perspiration off the skin to the outside of the garment promoting dryness. Wicking fabric goes by different names including polypropylene and CoolMax®. Clothing made from this fabric is available at some department stores [EMS (www.ems.com), Dicks Sporting Goods (www.dickssportinggoods.com)], and other internet based retailers [(www.sierratradingpost.com), (www.roadrunnersports.com)]. Women with hidradenitis under their breasts can benefit from wearing a tee-shirt made out of wicking fabric under their bra to help keep the area dry and to minimize chafing.
- 10) If clothing becomes wet with perspiration, change quickly into dry clothing, whenever possible.
- 11) Apply a strong topical antiperspirant to the affected areas at bedtime (e.g., Certain Dri - available without a prescription, and Drysol - requires a prescription.) Beware that if the skin is red and tender, or if the area has recently been shaved, the antiperspirant may sting.
- 12) You can apply absorbing powders (Zeasorb) but **do not use corn starch powder** as this promotes growth of bacteria and yeast.
- 13) Weight reduction should be a long-term goal as being overweight makes this condition worse.
- 14) Severe cases resistant to the above measures may respond to TNF α inhibitors and other biologic agents (e.g., Humira).

Learn more about hidradenitis suppurativa at this web site:

<http://www.emedicine.com/emerg/topic259.htm>

Learn more about a hidradenitis suppurativa support group at:

<http://www.angelfire.com/amiga/hssg>

