

What Is Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS)?

HS is a long-term inflammatory skin condition. It causes painful boil-like abscesses under the skin that can come back in the same areas over time. HS can happen anywhere on your body other than the palms of your hands, soles of your feet and lips.

Many people live with symptoms for years before going to the doctor or learning the name of the condition

Where HS most Commonly Appears

HS can appear anywhere on the body other than the palms of the hands, soles of the feet and the lips. **HS most commonly affects areas where skin rubs together, such as:**

- Under the arms (armpits)
- Groin or inner thighs
- Under the breasts
- Buttocks

Symptoms may start mild and can worsen over time.

What HS Is Not

It is important to know:

- **HS is not your fault**
- HS is not contagious
- HS is not caused by being “dirty”
- HS is not caused by being overweight or smoking
- HS is not caused by something you did wrong

Common Signs of HS

People with HS may experience:

- Painful lumps under the skin
- Swelling that returns in the same places
- Drainage of fluid or pus
- Thick scars that build over time
- Pain that affects movement, work, or sleep

Symptoms can come and go.

Tracking Your Symptoms Can Help

You may want to keep track of:

- Where symptoms appear
- How often they return
- Pain levels
- What treatments you’ve tried

This information can help guide conversations about care.

We recommend the Papaya App for tracking symptoms (available on Apple or Android).

HS Affects More Than Your Skin

Living with HS can impact:

- Daily activities
- Work or school
- Relationships
- Mental health & emotional well-being

It is common to feel:

- Frustrated
- Embarrassed
- Isolated
- Tired of explaining symptoms

These feelings are valid.

You Are Not Alone

HS is thought to affect 1 in every 100 people. Many people with HS feel misunderstood — even by healthcare providers. HS is still under-recognized, which means:

- Diagnosis may take time (can take 7-10 years on average)
- You may need to advocate for yourself by asking questions

This is not a failure — it is part of living with a complex condition

Mental Health Support Matters

HS can affect mental health. If possible, talk to your provider about:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Support options

Talking to a Healthcare Provider

If you are able, talk to a doctor or healthcare professional. You can ask:

- “Could this be hidradenitis suppurativa (HS)?”
- “Why do these symptoms keep coming back?”
- “What are my care options?”

It is okay to bring notes or photos if that helps explain your symptoms.

Care Options May Include

Management of HS can include:

- Treatments to reduce inflammation and pain
- Skin-care routines
- Medical or surgical procedures
- Lifestyle or supportive care

Treatment may look different for each person.

You Deserve Care Without Shame

HS is a medical condition. You deserve:

- Respect
- Compassion
- Accurate information
- Support