

Fact Sheet

Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS) is a chronic skin condition that causes painful abscesses, nodules, or lumps on the skin. HS often develops in the armpits, inner thighs, breasts, and groin area; however, it can appear anywhere there is a hair follicle. HS affects approximately 1%-4% of people in the U.S. and disproportionately impacts people from racial and ethnic minority groups.

Office of Minority Health and Health Equity

What is Hidradenitis Suppurativa?

Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS), sometimes called acne inversa, is a chronic skin condition that causes recurrent painful lumps deep in the skin. The lumps can look like abscesses, pimples, acne, sores, cysts, boils, or ingrown hairs. HS lumps can appear anywhere on the body but most often develop where skin touches skin like the armpits, inner thighs, breasts, and groin area.

The lumps caused by HS can break open, causing blood and pus to spill out. When the skin heals, it can scar significantly, in some cases leading to deformation of the skin. Abscesses and scars may also reappear in the same area, creating tunnels under the skin. Repeated scarring over time can make the skin less flexible and make it harder to move, impacting quality of life.

HS is not contagious and is not the result of poor hygiene. The exact cause of HS is currently unknown and there is no cure at this time.



Who is affected by Hidradenitis Suppurativa?

HS is estimated to affect 1%-4% of people in the U.S. Studies have shown that HS disproportionately affects people from racial and ethnic minority populations. In the U.S., people who are Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, or biracial develop HS more often than White people. Black or African American people may have more severe cases of HS.

Smoking and obesity are two potential triggers for HS. You may also be at greater risk if you have a family history of HS.

How is Hidradenitis Suppurativa treated?

While there is no cure for HS, there are treatment options that can prevent symptoms from worsening. Treatment may include biologics, antibiotics, pain management, specialized wound care, hormone or immune therapies, and surgery. Lifestyle modifications such as quitting smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, and wearing loose fitting clothing can also help manage HS.

The symptoms of HS can negatively impact quality of life and mental health. Early diagnosis and treatment are key. If you think you may have HS, talk to a health care provider about your symptoms.

Hidradenitis Suppurativa and Clinical Trials

The FDA encourages diverse participation in clinical trials. If you think a clinical trial may be right for you, talk to your health care provider. You can also search for clinical trials in your area at www.ClinicalTrials.gov.

For more information on health equity, visit www.fda.gov/HealthEquity.