

HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Hidradenitis means inflammation of the sweat glands. Suppurative means there is pus. The armpits are usually affected, but it can occur on the buttocks, groin, or under the breasts in females. It can affect both sexes, but is more common in young females.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Nodular lesions (sores) with the following features:

- They are firm, tender, and domed.
- Larger ones soften in the center and become painful.
- When pressed, they feel like an overfilled inner tube.
- They open, and often drain pus.
- Individual lesions (with or without drainage) heal slowly over 10 to 30 days.
- Scars are left on the skin after healing.
- Severity of the disorder varies from a few lesions per year to several lesions that form as old ones heal. They often show up at the same place on the skin.

CAUSES

Exact cause is unknown. The apocrine glands (a form of sweat glands) in the body seem to cause the problem. Substances in these glands enlarge the gland. The outlets become blocked, probably by heat, sweat, or incomplete gland development. The substances that are in the glands force sweat and bacteria into skin tissue, which then becomes infected.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Exposure to heat and moisture.
- Family history. This disorder is most common in black females.
- Smoking may be a risk factor.
- Obesity does not cause the disorder, but may make it worse.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

No specific preventive measures.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This disorder may last many years, from puberty through the following 10 to 20 years. Symptoms can often be controlled with treatment. There is no cure for this disorder.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Extensive lesions that do not respond to treatment.
- Scarring may restrict movement of arm.
- Other medical problems due to infection or inflammation.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider can usually diagnose the disorder by an exam of the affected area. Medical tests may be done to check for infection or other problems.
- Treatment usually involves self-care measures, drug therapy, and sometimes surgery.
- Avoid getting overheated and sweating.
- Avoid tight clothing or clothes that irritate the skin.
- Wash with antibacterial soap. A liquid form may be used for washing, and then applied as a lotion. It may help reduce odor.
- Don't shave the infected area.
- Avoid stress if you can. It may make symptoms worse.
- Use soaks to relieve itching and hasten healing. Warm-water soaks are usually more soothing for pain or inflammation. Cool-water soaks feel better for itching.
- Surgery to open and drain abscesses or to remove involved skin may be recommended.

MEDICATIONS

- You may be prescribed:
 - Injection of cortisone drugs directly into the lesions.
 - Antibiotics to fight infection.
 - Hormones to help subdue inflammation.
 - Isotretinoin has been effective in some patients. This is a potent drug, and must be given under medical supervision.
- For minor discomfort, you may use drugs such as acetaminophen.

ACTIVITY

Restrict your activity in hot weather. Avoid working in the heat, if possible. Swimming is an excellent activity.

DIET

No special diet, unless you need to lose weight. Losing weight may help ease the symptoms.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of hidradenitis suppurativa.
- Lesions don't improve after 5 days of treatment, or new symptoms develop.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page