



What is hidradenitis suppurativa?

Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) is a skin disease. It affects both men and women, but is most common in girls 13-16 years of age. People with HS develop bumps or boils in their armpits. Bumps sometimes occur on the buttocks, in the groin, or under the breasts. HS is caused by hormonal changes that stimulate sweat glands. The glands get bigger and their openings become blocked. Since the openings are blocked, fluid from the gland is forced into surrounding tissues. This area can become infected.

What are the symptoms of hidradenitis suppurativa?

The bumps vary in size, and are firm, tender, and raised. Larger bumps may become soft in the center and very painful. If you press them, they feel like they are filled with fluid. Bumps sometimes open by themselves and drain pus. Individual bumps heal slowly over 10 to 30 days. They can leave scars. HS varies from a few bumps per year to a constant series of bumps that form as old ones heal. HS can occur again in the same place.



What tests are needed?

There are no specific tests for HS. It is diagnosed after a physical examination. You may be sent to a dermatologist, a doctor who specializes in diseases of the skin.

What treatment is needed?

Treatment is necessary for HS. Your doctor can give you medicine to control HS. Medicine can reduce the size and secretions of your sweat glands. Medicine can also control inflammation and treat infections. Medicine can be injected into the bumps to reduce discomfort and help healing. If medicine doesn't help, your doctor will try other treatments. Surgery can remove the affected skin and sweat glands. Radiation and laser light have also been used. You may use nonprescription medicine, such as acetaminophen, for minor discomfort.



Do

- Do minimize heat and sweating. Restrict your activity in hot weather
- Do lose weight, if necessary
- Do wash with antibacterial soaps
- Do use soaks to relieve itching and help healing. Warm-water soaks are usually more soothing for pain or soreness. Cool-water soaks feel better for itching
- Do swim. Swimming is an excellent exercise for people with HS



Don't

- Don't use commercial underarm deodorants
- Don't wear tight clothing or fabrics made of synthetic fibers
- Don't engage in strenuous activity in the heat



Recovery time

Individual bumps heal slowly usually within a month. They can leave scars. HS can vary from a few lesions per year to a constant series of sores that form as old ones heal.



What can be done to stop it from happening again?

- Restrict your activities in hot weather
- During periods of heat avoid outdoor jobs if possible
- Swimming is excellent exercise



Further information on hidradenitis suppurativa can be found from:

Merck & Co, Inc.

www.merck.com

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