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Hidradenitis Suppurativa

What is hidradenitis suppurativa (HS)?

Also called acne inversa, hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) is a condition of chronic inflammation of the follicle that typically occurs in the underarm, groin, buttocks, and below the breast. It most commonly occurs on skin that experiences repeated friction. Symptoms include inflammatory nodules, abscesses, skin tunneling, clusters of clogged pores (comedones) that come and go and can eventually lead to thick, rope-like scarring. This can have a significant impact on quality of life as the common symptoms cause pain, infection, odorous discharge and often require surgical drainage and antibiotic use. Unfortunately, HS has no known cure, but can be managed.

Who gets HS?

HS is seen in 1-4% of the population, occurring more frequently in women and first appears typically in the 20's-30's. There is thought to be a genetic component to it, so if family members have this condition, you are also more likely to have it, as well. It is seen more commonly in those with an elevated BMI, smokers, and people who are on or who have been on birth control. New data shows it may also be more closely seen in people with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

How is HS treated?

The goal of treatment is minimize pain and treat active infections, as well as decrease the rate of symptom recurrence.

Antibiotics:

- Topical clindamycin gel applied two times daily in areas with recurrent flares
- Topical compounded medication that combines metronidazole, rifampin, clindamycin and spirowash used twice daily for flares
- Oral doxycycline 100mg can be taken one to two times daily for 3 months and once stabilized, can continue using topical clindamycin. Oral doxycycline can cause gastrointestinal distress and light sensitivity

Hormonal:

- Oral birth control pills daily
- Spironolactone is a medication that reduces testosterone levels in the bloodstream. It is recommended to take 100-200mg daily. Side effects can include low blood pressure, dizziness, headache, irregular periods, and frequent urination. It is important to periodically get blood drawn while on this medication



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- Metformin is a diabetes medication that improves insulin resistance and may help with weight loss. It is recommended to take 1000-1500mg daily. Most common side effects include gastrointestinal distress
- Skin lasers can help by decreasing inflammation through heat
- Zinc gluconate 90mg oral supplementation daily is recommended to also help decrease inflammation. Common symptom includes gastrointestinal distress
- High dose vitamin D3 supplementation can help improve your body's natural immunity and prevent infection
- Warm compresses can be applied to active lesions as needed
- It is recommended to stop smoking
- Weight loss can help as it reduces repeated friction of the skin and helps to balance hormones
- Surgical management may be recommended in the rare case that the above treatments do not help, and can be performed by a Dermatologist. Dermatologists may also consider prescribing immune modulators