

# NOT JUST PAINFUL BUMPS

## Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS) FAQs

This resource supplies providers with a basis of information and language to address patients' frequently asked questions about HS.

### What is HS?

HS is a disease that affects hair follicles. HS causes small, painful lumps to form deep under the skin in areas of the body where skin touches.<sup>1</sup> These painful lumps can worsen and become abscesses that can break open and leak blood and pus.<sup>2</sup> HS recurs frequently if left untreated.<sup>1</sup>

### What makes HS occur?

Many environmental and genetic factors contribute to HS. The actual cause is unknown, although people with HS have an increased amount of inflammation.<sup>2</sup>

### Where does HS commonly occur?

HS commonly occurs within areas of skin folds, including the underarms, breast, groin, genitals, and buttocks. It may also occur in an area where there is chronic moisture and rubbing, such as the bra band and nape of the neck.<sup>3</sup>

### Is HS genetic?

1 in 3 people with HS report having a family member with HS.<sup>2</sup>

## What lifestyle factors contribute to HS?

People who are obese may suffer from more severe cases of HS. Studies also show many people with HS are smokers. Wearing tight clothing that causes friction, use of antiperspirants and deodorant, as well as shaving may contribute to the severity of HS.<sup>2</sup>

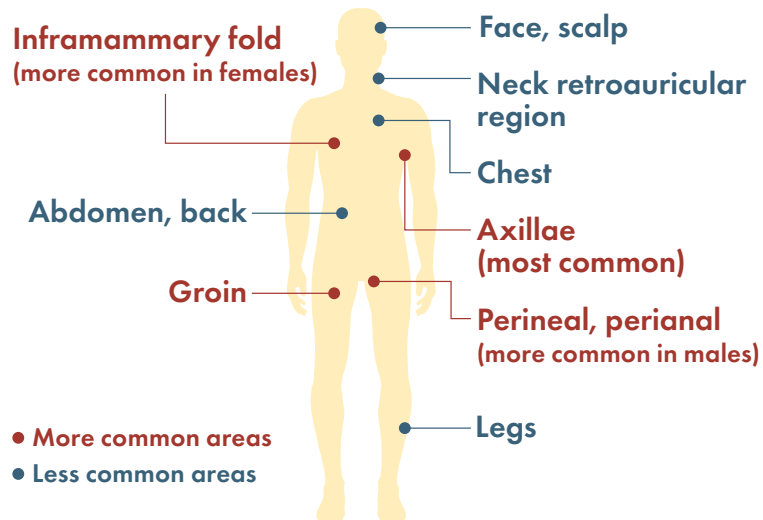
## How do HCPs identify HS?

HS has many staging scales. The most commonly used scale is the Hurley Clinical Staging System.<sup>3</sup> The Hurley system is useful for rapid classification of HS severity, but it has limitations and is not a precise monitoring tool.<sup>4</sup>

### Types of Lesions<sup>3</sup>

- » Comedones
- » Nodules
- » Abscesses
- » Tunnels, sinus tracts, and/or fistulas
- » Scarring

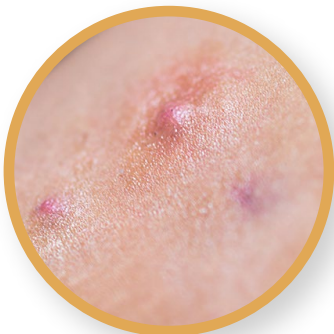
### Site<sup>5</sup>



### Recurrence<sup>5,6</sup>

**Chronic**  
**2+ recurrences**  
**within 6 months**  
**and**  
**New lesions**

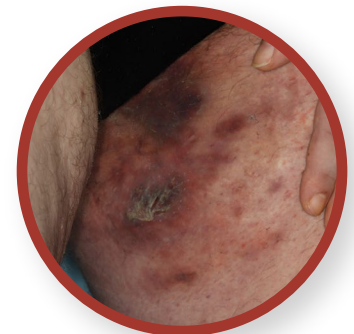
### HURLEY STAGE I (MILD DISEASE)



### HURLEY STAGE II (MODERATE DISEASE)



### HURLEY STAGE III (SEVERE DISEASE)



Images are of actual clinical trial patients at baseline.



## Does HS affect men and women differently?

HS is more common in females.<sup>3</sup> Lesions are more likely to appear under the breast, in the underarm, and around the groin area in women. In males, lesions may appear around the anus or in an atypical site such as the scalp.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, because sex hormones influence HS, pregnancy and the menstrual cycle can have an effect on the disease state.<sup>7</sup>

## Are other diseases associated with HS?

Many diseases are associated with HS. These include skin diseases such as acne, abscesses on the scalp with hair loss, chronic infections of the skin between the buttocks, and ulcer and sore development on the skin, especially the legs.

Other diseases linked to HS include IBD, spondyloarthritis, polycystic ovarian syndrome, dyslipidemia, hypertension, metabolic disorder, and cardiovascular disease.

Due to the nature of HS, patients' mental health is often negatively impacted. Patients may struggle with depression, generalized anxiety disorder, suicidality, substance abuse disorder, and sexual disorder.

Additionally, some patients with Down Syndrome develop HS.<sup>8</sup>

IBD=inflammatory bowel disease. IL=interleukin. TNF=tumor necrosis factor.

### References

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3. Wieczorek M, Walecka I. Hidradenitis suppurativa - known and unknown disease. *Reumatologia*. 2018;56(6):337-339.
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8. Garg A, Malviya N, Strunk A, et al. Comorbidity screening in hidradenitis suppurativa: evidence-based recommendations from the US and Canadian Hidradenitis Suppurativa Foundations. *J Am Acad Dermatol*. 2022;86(5):1092-1101.