



Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS) Information for Healthcare Professionals

What is HS?

- Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS) is a chronic, painful autoinflammatory condition.
- It causes lumps, abscesses, and tunnels in armpits, groin, buttocks, and under breasts.
- HS is not caused by infection or poor hygiene. It's linked to hair follicle inflammation and genetics.
- Usually starts around puberty or early adulthood and worsens if untreated.

What Patients Require.

- Early recognition and diagnosis recorded in their medical notes.
- A Timely referral to a dermatologist , ideally one specialising in HS.
- Interim care, which may include antibiotics for inflamed lesions, pain relief, and mental health support.
- GP continuity is essential for understanding.

Referral Pathway (NHS, UK)

GP → Dermatology: Request referral to a consultant dermatologist with HS experience.

Dermatology options:

Medical management (antibiotics, retinoids, hormonal treatments, biologics).

Surgical options for severe or persistent disease.

Specialist HS clinics (available in some NHS Trusts).

Why Early Recognition Matters

- Average UK diagnosis delay: 7+ years.
- Often misdiagnosed as boils or ache.
- HS causes pain, scarring, mobility limits, and mental health impact.
- Early referral prevents worsening and potentially reduces long-term damage.

Clinical Clues for Diagnosis

- Recurring lumps or abscesses in the same areas (2+ times in 6 months).
- Blackheads, tunnels, and scarring in armpits, groin, buttocks, or under breasts.
- Family history may be reported.
- Commonly mistaken for: pilonidal cyst, folliculitis, furunculosis, acne and boils

Key Message to GPs

If you see a patient with recurrent boils in the same places, particularly in folds of skin, please suspect HS.

- Patients often feel dismissed or misdiagnosed; acknowledging HS is an important first step.
- HS is lifelong, but proper care can greatly improve quality of life.
- HS is considered by many to be the most painful skin condition.
- Everything written here is in line with the current information about HS published by the NHS.

Key Message to Healthcare Professionals.

This leaflet exists as an olive branch to you. As a community we recognise that HS is an underrecognised disease and as a community we are coming together to raise awareness. For more information and to read views from a patients perspective, please visit www.livinglifewithhs.co.uk