

Background

Hidradenitis suppurativa is the medical term for a condition in which a person gets recurring infections in the armpits or groins. It commonly affects young people between puberty and age 30 and affects women more often than men. It is more common in people with dark skin, more common in people who are overweight, and much more common in smokers. It affects the areas of skin with sweat glands in the armpits or groins and is caused by blocking of the hair follicles, trapping bacteria inside, leading to bursting of the follicles and chronic inflammation deep in the skin.

People with hidradenitis get recurring infections in the armpits and/or the groins with redness, itching, abscesses, oozing areas, thickening of the skin and scarring.

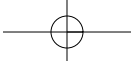
Treatment

In the early stages hidradenitis can be controlled by meticulous personal hygiene, avoiding tight or sweaty clothes (such as nylon tights) and stopping smoking completely. For people who are overweight, then

losing excess weight is helpful. If this is not enough, then the next stage is to take a long course of antibiotics in order to sterilise the skin as it grows out. Recommended antibiotics are clindamycin or tetracycline tablets or clindamycin cream, that should be used non-stop for three months. These can be obtained on prescription from your GP.

In some women hidradenitis starts when they start taking the combined contraceptive pill. If this is the case then switching to a different contraceptive pill with more oestrogen can relieve the symptoms.

In patients with severe recurring hidradenitis then some can be helped by surgery. However this involves quite extensive removal of the affected skin if it is to stop the disease coming back. Simply draining the abscesses always results in them coming back again. Because curative surgery is quite extensive, it is usually done by a plastic surgeon and may involve skin grafting.



Further information

Information is also available from:

British Skin Foundation

<http://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk>

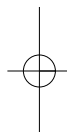
Hidradenitis Suppurativa Foundation

<http://www.hs-foundation.org>

The Whittington Hospital **NHS**
NHS Trust

Patient information

Hidradenitis suppurativa (recurring infections in armpits or groins)



www.whittington.nhs.uk

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