

# Hidradenitis

## What is hidradenitis?

Hidradenitis is painful inflammation (redness and swelling) of the sweat glands. At first, it looks like pimples, but the pimples can become large red bumps under the skin. It often happens in the parts of your body that get sweaty or hot, or where your body rubs against itself. For example, it often occurs in the groin, armpits, or the skin between the buttocks.

## What is the cause?

The exact cause of hidradenitis is not known. It tends to run in families and normally starts in the teen years. It's more common in women, African Americans, people with acne, people who are overweight, and people who smoke.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Red skin bumps that may itch, burn, or hurt
- Skin bumps that are tender to touch, contain pus, and may get bigger and break open. The bumps may leave scars as they heal.
- Thick scars may form around and between bumps.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history and examine you. The diagnosis is made asking about whether you've had these bumps before and by inspecting the skin for the typical skin changes.

Tests may include:

- A test of drainage from a bump to check for infection
- Blood test
- Biopsy, which is the removal of a small sample of skin tissue for testing

## How is it treated?

There is no cure for hidradenitis, but treatment can usually control symptoms. It often comes and goes (flare-ups) even with treatment. Your healthcare provider may prescribe medicine to:

- Decrease how often you get these bumps
- Treat infections
- Decrease swelling
- Relieve pain
- Treat acne

If your symptoms are severe, your provider may recommend:

- Surgery to drain infected bumps or to remove scar tissue. Although surgery may cure one bump, you may get new bumps in a different place.
- Laser therapy to remove bumps and scars.

## **How can I take care of myself?**

To help decrease pain when you have a flare-up, try putting a clean, warm, wet washcloth on painful bumps. Leave the cloth on each bump for about 10 minutes. Do this 3 or 4 times a day. If the bumps are in the groin or buttock area, sitting in a tub of warm water for 10 to 15 minutes, 3 to 4 times a day, may help.

To help prevent flare-ups, it may help to:

- Lose weight if you are overweight, to decrease the number of areas where skin rubs together.
- Stop smoking.
- Wear loose clothing to decrease friction.
- Avoid irritating your skin by not shaving in places where you get the bumps, like your underarms.
- Keep from getting overheated and sweaty.

Follow the full course of treatment prescribed by your healthcare provider. Ask your provider:

- How and when you will hear your test results
- How long it will take to recover
- What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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