DEALING WITH PAIN ASSOCIATED WITH HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA

Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) is a painful, long-term skin condition that causes recurring boils and abscesses, usually around the armpits, groin, on the buttocks and under the breasts. The pain of the condition may affect the way you live your life, so it is important to discuss pain management options with your healthcare professional.

UNDERSTANDING PAIN IN HS

Around half of people with HS may experience itching, burning, stinging, pain and heat up to 2 days before a boil-like lump or abscess appears on the skin.

Living with the pain is not always easy and may limit basic daily activities, such as getting dressed or moving around.

When you have HS your pain can be:

- **Chronic**: Chronic pain affects every day functioning, leading to the disease becoming an extensive burden.
- **Acute**: Acute pain is shorter lived and can happen when the disease flares up, or during/after a dressing change.

There are also different types of chronic pain you might experience:

- **Nociceptive**: Usually described as tenderness or an aching, throbbing or gnawing pain
- **Neuropathic**: Usually described as a stabbing, stinging, burning or shooting pain
THE CAUSE OF PAIN IN HS

If you are experiencing pain, it is important to discuss how to manage it with your healthcare professional to help improve your day to day life.

Your healthcare professional will firstly need to understand the cause of the pain, for example, could it be:

- An external cause, such as a dressing change that’s causing pain
- An infection
- That you have had, or need, surgery (i.e. for the drainage of an abscess, or removal of an affected area of skin)

Top tip:
The NHS runs pain management programmes for certain conditions depending on the severity and type of pain – your healthcare professional will be able to provide more information about who is suitable for these.

They may wish to understand more about the timing of the pain. Here are some examples of what your healthcare professional might ask you:

1. Does your pain occur when you get a boil-like lump (also known as a nodule) or abscess?

2. Does leaking of fluid from the lump relieve the pain? Has it previously helped to have your skin drained surgically?

3. Is the pain caused by scarring or inflammation of the skin?

4. Does friction from wearing tight clothing worsen the pain?

5. Is there any increase in fluid leaking from the lump and smell that may indicate an infection?

The description of the pain will allow your healthcare professional to decide which type of pain you are experiencing.
TREATMENT AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR PAIN

Treatment and management of pain depends on the cause of the pain. Once your healthcare professional has identified the cause they can discuss with you the best management plan for you.

Usually pain relief creams (applied directly to the skin) or pain killers that you swallow with water, are initially used to treat pain in people living with HS. If these do not help to reduce your pain, then your healthcare professional may discuss other treatment options with you.

GETTING SUPPORT

You may want to talk to your friends and family about how the pain is impacting you. They may be able to offer additional support to help you manage your condition.

You may also want to talk to other people with HS who are going through similar experiences to you.

This resource is one of a number of resources available as part of the Champions for Change campaign. For further information about HS or to download the other resources, visit [www.hidradenitissuppurativa.co.uk](http://www.hidradenitissuppurativa.co.uk).

FIRST SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HS

- What is hidradenitis suppurativa?

SEEING A GP

- Seeing a GP about hidradenitis suppurativa

SEEING A SPECIALIST

- Seeing a dermatologist about hidradenitis suppurativa

LIVING WITH HS

- Living with hidradenitis suppurativa
- Taking care of sore spots and wounds
- Dealing with pain associated with hidradenitis suppurativa

USEFUL RESOURCES

You may also find the following resources useful:

- **The Hidradenitis Suppurativa Trust (the HS Trust):** A UK registered charity dedicated to raising awareness of HS and supporting those living with the condition
- **NHS Choices:** The official website of the NHS providing comprehensive health information on many conditions
- **British Association of Dermatologists (BAD):** Although primarily an organisation for healthcare professionals, the BAD has a section on their website for the public. This section provides patients with access to information, resources and tools around a number of skin conditions

References: