



# Practical tips to help you manage your HS

Living with hidradenitis suppurativa (HS) can be challenging, affecting everyday activities like taking a shower and sitting or sleeping comfortably. But managing your symptoms well can make a big improvement in your quality of life.

**We've worked closely with a collection of individuals who share your journey and struggles with HS. Inside, you'll not only find practical tips to help you manage your physical symptoms, but also strategies to help support your emotional wellbeing.**



Inspired by patients.  
Driven by science.

# Living well with HS



## Opt for comfortable clothing:

Sometimes it's hard to know what to wear during an HS flare. There are lots of nice loose-fitting breathable fabrics that work to minimise friction and irritation, especially when exercising. Clothes with 100% cotton, rayon, or bamboo fibres are also recommended, along with sports bras or camisoles with built-in wireless bras as well as women's briefs or boy shorts.<sup>1</sup>



## Choose gentle skin-care products:

As some products can be harsh on skin with HS, it's important to look for a mild, fragrance-free antiperspirant that does not contain alcohol, baking soda, parabens, or dyes. Your dermatologist or local pharmacist should be able to recommend one.<sup>1,2</sup>



## Explore hair removal methods:

If possible, look into laser hair removal to see if it's a suitable option for you – it has been helpful for some people. Laser hair removal will not cure HS, but it makes sebaceous glands less active and might prevent hair follicles getting infected.<sup>2</sup> Above all, avoid shaving or waxing on or near any HS lumps that you may have, as it can irritate the skin.<sup>1</sup>



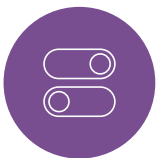
## During your menstrual cycle:

You may find it more comfortable to use tampons rather than sanitary towels to reduce the friction in your groin area. If your HS flares during your period, talk to your doctor or sexual health clinician about the different forms of hormonal contraception available to regulate your hormones.<sup>1</sup>



## Have regular baths or showers:

While these can help remove any sweat and bacteria on your skin, reducing your chance of flare-ups,<sup>1,2</sup> we understand that baths and showers can be very uncomfortable. It might help to have the water pressure on low. Some people with HS also say that placing a mirror in the shower helps them clean carefully around wounds that may be on their back. Antimicrobial washes (e.g., ones that contain benzoyl peroxide or zinc pyrithione) are good at removing bacteria.<sup>2</sup>



## Identify your triggers:

Not everyone with HS will have triggers, but if you do, it might be helpful to keep a symptom journal to pinpoint things that may be contributing to your flare-ups. Check out our handbook for more information on what could be causing your flare-ups [\[link to UCBCares\]](#).<sup>1</sup>



## Choose the right wound dressing:

It's recommended to choose a soft and gentle dressing that's easy to apply and stays securely in place, to prioritise your comfort. Absorbent, adhesive-free and antimicrobial dressings are best to reduce your chance of a secondary infection.<sup>3</sup> Woven gauzes, i.e., swabs, can stick to the skin and be painful to change – so try to avoid these types of dressings.<sup>4</sup> Rest assured, your local pharmacist should have a range of dressings available, and should be able to assist you with cost-effective options.



# Improving your emotional wellbeing

## Explore what is available to you:

It's always good to hear from others currently navigating life with HS. In addition to the resources we have online, there are several patient support groups that will help guide you through your journey with HS. [\[HS Ireland\]](#) is a great place to start for those living in [\[Ireland or the UK\]](#).

I tried to explain to family and friends what I was living with. They had no idea, they didn't understand ... so I've recently started advocating for HS on Instagram

- Sarah, living with HS in the UK\*

## Don't be afraid to seek professional help:

Many people with HS find that it impacts their mental and emotional health. Consider counselling or talking therapies for emotional support – they may provide you with the tools and guidance you need to manage the challenges that come with HS.<sup>5</sup>

I was convinced I'd done this to myself. But then I thought, I've not been a smoker from the age of 12 – when it started – and I was actually quite athletic beforehand

- Sarah, living with HS in the UK\*

## Understand how your HS works:

HS is thought to be due to a combination of genetic, environmental and hormonal factors<sup>6</sup> – you have not done anything to cause it. Read our myth-busting guide to know what HS is, and importantly, what it isn't, [here](#), for more information.

**Build a support network:**

On top of connecting with other patients (online or in person), talk to those you care about. Sharing your knowledge and experiences of HS with those around you can help them understand what HS is, how it affects you, and what they can do to help.<sup>5,7</sup>

**Incorporate relaxation techniques:**

Whether it is deep-breathing exercises, meditation, or other calming activities (like writing a journal), find what works best for you to reduce HS-related stress and enhance your day-to-day emotional wellbeing.<sup>5,7</sup>

If you feel overwhelmed, that's okay. Starting small with one of the actions above will help support your mental health throughout the challenging times. Implement some of these tips and empower yourself to lead a more fulfilling life. Remember, you are not alone – seek support, stay informed, and prioritise self-care for a better future.



Learn more about HS at [\[URL\]](#)

## References

1. Collier E, et al. Int J Womens Dermatol. 2020;6:85–88.
2. American Academy of Dermatology Association. Hidradenitis suppurativa: self-care. Available at: <https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/a-z/hidradenitis-suppurativa-self-care>. Accessed: June 2024.
3. Dermatological Nursing. Optimising hidradenitis suppurativa care. A multi-professional consensus statement. <https://bdng.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/DN-September-2022-Supplement-HS.pdf>. Accessed June 2024.
4. Chopra D, et al. J Am Acad Dermatol. 2023;89:1289–1292.
5. ShareCare. Hidradenitis suppurativa: Mental and emotional health. Available at: <https://www.sharecare.com/skin-health/hs-mental-emotional-health>. Accessed May 2024.
6. Diaz MJ, et al. Curr Issues Mol Biol. 2023;45:4400–4415.
7. Everyday Health. How to Manage Stress if You Have Hidradenitis Suppurativa. <https://www.everydayhealth.com/hidradenitis-suppurativa/stress-management/>. Accessed June 2024.