

Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS or Acne Inversa)

HS is an acute or chronic inflammation of the sweat glands. When it affects the armpit it is known as “*golondrino*” in Spanish. It is not an infection and it is not contagious.

Its cause is unknown, but its appearance is brought on by genetic predisposition and external factors. It affects 1-4% of the population, of both sexes, although it is more common in women. It appears during adolescence, because this is when the affected glands, responsible for our body smell, start to function. The most frequently affected areas are the arm pits, but the groin, buttocks and areas around the rectum, breasts and pubis can also be affected.

What are the symptoms?

It starts off with red, itching skin and more sweat than normal. Then a number of inflamed spots (nodules) appear under the skin. They are very painful and can last for weeks before disappearing spontaneously. Sometimes they turn into abscesses and may discharge pus.

The chronic form triggers repeated flare-ups. Each time the swollen area gets bigger, making a space under the skin, like a network of fistulas connecting the affected areas. This chronic inflammation causes scars and skin retraction.

How is it diagnosed?

The family doctor will simply be guided by the disturbances that the patient describes, by checking for typical lesions in the parts of the body that it normally affects and by its chronic progression in the form of flare-ups.

What prognosis does it have?

It is a benign disease, but its chronic character and the symptoms that it causes in its moderate or severe forms can make it very physically and psychologically debilitating. This has a

huge impact on the quality of life of the person affected.

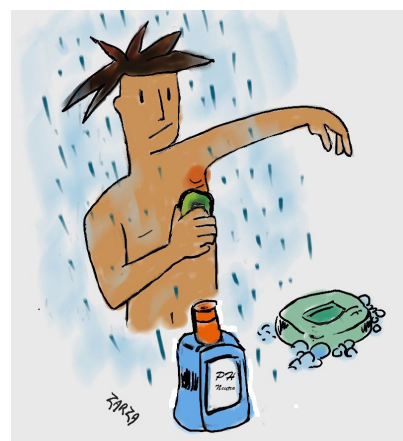
What can I do?

Go to your family doctor as soon as the first symptoms appear.

Your doctor will assess how serious the illness is, prescribe the most suitable topical or general treatment and monitor your progress. The prolonged use of systemic antibiotics is not appropriate. In certain situations, your doctor will refer you to the dermatologist to decide together the most suitable treatment.

How can we avoid new flare-ups?

- **Wash the affected area** with antiseptic soaps or gels with an acidic pH.
- **Wear loose clothing** including your underwear and avoid tight belts to reduce friction on the affected areas.
- **Avoid shaving** the affected area.
- **Keep your skin cool**, avoid getting hot and sweating.
- **Avoid being overweight or obese.** The most effective way to control the disease is to lose weight, follow a balanced diet and get regular physical exercise.
- **Give up smoking.** You will have fewer flare-ups and they won't be so serious.



If your state of mind is affected, you will find it helpful to get **psychological emotional support**.