

## **Information Leaflet.**

### **Hidradenitis Suppurativa.**

#### **What is Hidradenitis Suppurativa?**

Hidradenitis is a chronic disease affecting the skin's sweat glands. Inflammation occurs in the sweat glands found mainly in the armpits, groin, breast and buttocks resulting in boil-like lumps, areas leaking pus, and subsequent scarring. It develops more commonly between the ages of 20-40 years and can be a distressing skin condition. Although relatively common it is often misdiagnosed as a simple abscess, boil, or in-growing hair so delayed diagnosis and referral is not uncommon.

#### **What are the symptoms of Hidradenitis Suppurativa?**

Hidradenitis is usually painful or itchy. The skin shows lumps that look like boils or cysts that may constantly leak pus. These boils may slowly disappear or persist to become a draining abscess. The area will eventually degrade or 'burn out' causing scarring to the affected area.

#### **Why do I have Hidradenitis Suppurativa?**

The true cause in some people is unknown but women are affected more often than men. As hidradenitis suppurativa does not occur before puberty or after the menopause then hormonal factors are believed to be involved. Hidradenitis suppurativa may also improve in pregnancy but often worsens before menstrual periods.

Obesity and smoking are suggested as triggering factors thus weight loss and smoking cessation are advocated.

Approximately one third of cases have a family history of hidradenitis so there is also a possibility of inheriting the condition.

Hidradenitis Suppurativa may also have some common factors with Crohn's disease and cystic acne.

#### **How is Hidradenitis Suppurativa diagnosed?**

There is no specific test. Diagnosis is made by close examination and investigation into the history of the skin condition. If pus is present then a swab may be taken to test for the presence of any bacterial infection.

#### **Can Hidradenitis Suppurativa be cured?**

Although hidradenitis may eventually disappear it cannot be cured. Although treatment is available it cannot stop the disease completely.

## **Can Hidradenitis Suppurativa be treated?**

Hidradenitis suppurativa can be treated but not cured. Treatment works best in the early stages of the disease using medical treatments. In cases where hidradenitis has been present for a longer time resulting in larger more extensive lesions or scarring then surgery may be required.

## **Where can I get further information?**

British Association of Dermatologists – information leaflet  
<http://www.bad.org.uk/site/825/default.aspx>

British Association for Hidradenitis suppurativa,  
PO BOX 550  
Chatham  
Kent.  
ME4 9AH  
[www.ba-hs.org.uk](http://www.ba-hs.org.uk)

HS-UK support for hidradenitis sufferers.  
<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/hs-uk/>