Questions for Your Doctor About Hidradenitis Suppurativa

Prepare for your visit with your doctor by considering what questions you want answered.

June 1, 2021 By Jeanette L. Pinnace

For many people, a visit to the doctor can be a nerve-racking experience. But for those with hidradenitis suppurativa (HS), the embarrassment that sometimes accompanies the condition may be an added burden. The chronic inflammatory skin condition can result in the formation of boils around the armpits, groin, breasts, buttocks and upper thighs that may contain a malodorous liquid that can seep out suddenly.

As a result, HS, which is sometimes referred to as acne inversa, may go undiagnosed until the condition becomes unbearable because of delayed treatment.

If you're affected by HS, prepare for your visit with your health care provider as you would for any other activity. First, consider what questions you want answered. Use a writing pad or the notes app on your smartphone to list your symptoms. A visit to the doctor can provoke a lot of anxiety, and jotting down your queries will ensure that you do not forget your most pressing concerns.

This memo to yourself should include when you discovered your first lesion, how long it was present before your visit, which medications (including dosages and frequency) you are taking and whether you've tried to self-treat with home remedies and, if so, what the results were.

Keeping notes is a good way to remember what you discussed with your doctor, including any follow-up you're instructed to implement when you get home.

Talk candidly with your doctor about your condition. Do not be afraid to ask any question you may have. Your doctor's office should be the one place you can feel comfortable and confident that you'll learn what you need to know without being judged.

Some Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- How severe is my condition?
- Is there anything I can do on my own to help reduce my symptoms?
- Are there any activities I should avoid? (For example, participating in some high-intensity sports

may worsen your HS symptoms.)

- What are my options for medications? Which drugs would be best for me?
- If I need to take medication, how long must I take it? (The duration may vary by patient. However, having some idea of how long the treatment is could help you plan accordingly.)
- What, if any, are the adverse effects of specific medicines, and are there alternatives to taking any of the medications prescribed?
- Can lifestyle changes have an impact on the course of my disease? (Smoking cessation and weight management could help manage HS.)

You may need advice in explaining your condition to others in your circle. Since HS can also appear in the genital region, you may need help in explaining HS to a new sexual partner. Do not hesitate to ask your doctor for advice in dealing with this sensitive issue.

Getting answers can only help reduce your anxiety and aid you in understanding your condition.

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