

# Hidradenitis suppurativa (HS)

## Myths Exposed

### Myth

**1** HS is not a serious disease.

### Fact

HS has a devastating physical and psychological impact. Symptoms including boils and lesions in skin-folds cause pain, purulent discharge and unpleasant odour, and can result in sinus tracts, scarring, strictures, and fistulas. Two-thirds of individuals with HS struggle with depression and anxiety.

### Myth

**2** HS is a rare disease.

### Fact

HS afflicts between 1 and 4% of Canadians. HS prevalence is commonly underestimated due to a lack of disease awareness among healthcare providers. Additionally, some patients who have symptoms delay seeking care or do not seek it at all due to feelings of shame, fear or embarrassment.

### Myth

**3** HS is curable.

### Fact

Patients attempt multiple medical and natural treatments to control symptoms and manage pain, though most offer little or no improvement. A clinical study found that a new drug, now available in Canada, reduced HS abscesses in half of patients with moderate/severe disease.

### Myth

**4** HS is caused by poor hygiene.

### Fact

The cause of HS is unknown but may be related to an over-active immune system, hormonal changes, genetics and also to lifestyle factors such as being overweight and smoking.

### Myth

**5** HS is contagious.

### Fact

HS is often misdiagnosed as a sexually transmitted infection, staphylococcus infection, or other infectious disease. However, HS cannot be transmitted through skin or airborne contact. Lack of disease awareness among healthcare providers can lead to inaccurate diagnoses, ineffective prescribing, and delay in receiving appropriate treatment for symptoms.

For more information, visit:  
[www.canadianskin.ca/hsreport](http://www.canadianskin.ca/hsreport)

