

## HIDRACENSUS 7.3

Improved HS care starts here

# Taking control of your hidradenitis suppurativa (HS):

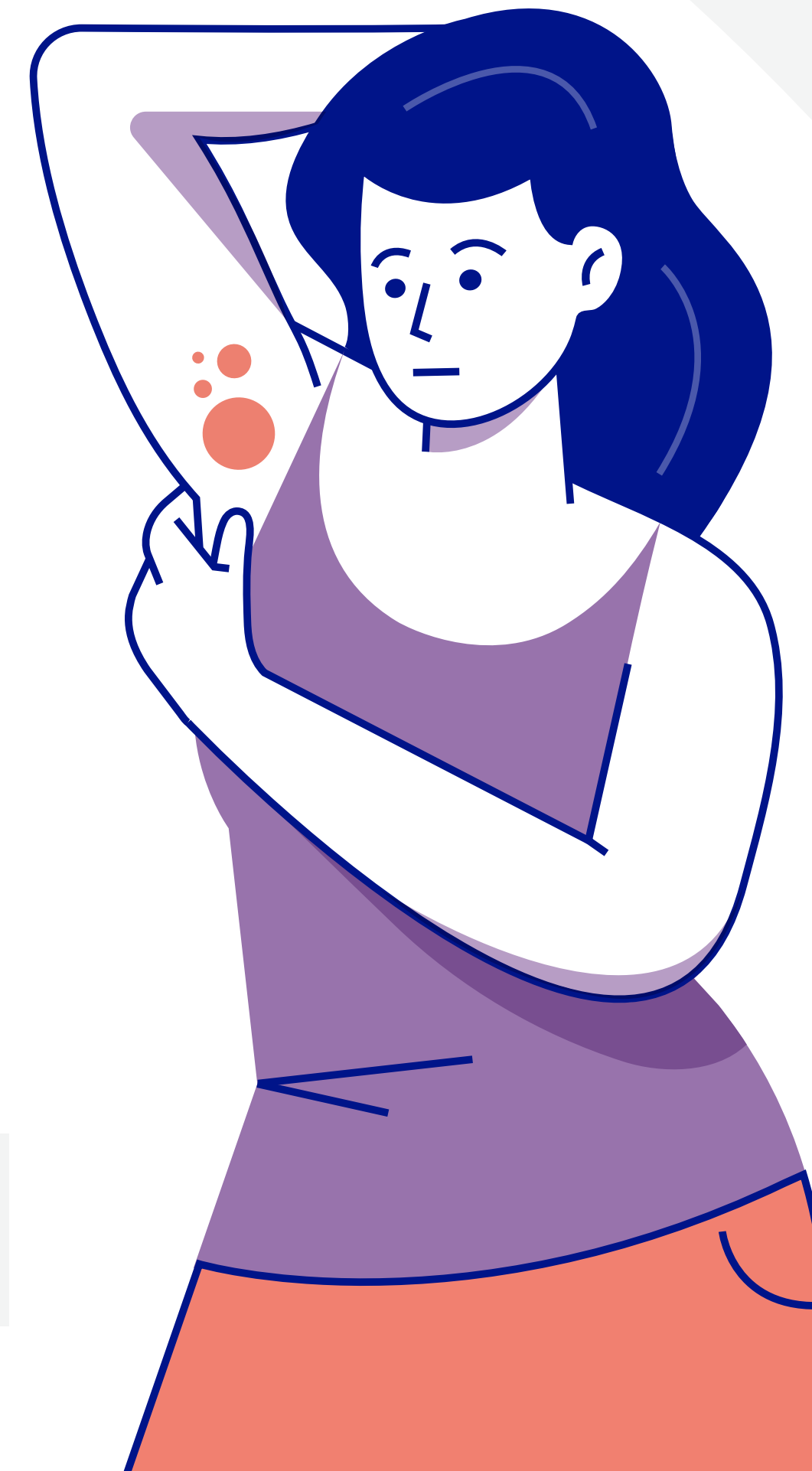
## A guide to effective primary wound management

HS is a chronic inflammatory condition and is not contagious. It often leads to painful, swollen, pus-filled bumps which come and go in areas where skin rubs together, such as your armpits, groin, anus, buttocks or under the breasts.<sup>1</sup> These bumps or 'lesions' can lead to wounds which sometimes drain (leak fluids such as pus and blood) and may need daily care to prevent infection and absorb

any pus.<sup>1-4</sup> These wounds are often called 'primary' or 'routine' because they are caused by HS itself.<sup>5,6</sup> This guide contains information and practical tips based on the latest scientific evidence to help you care for these wounds when they occur. However, it is important to remember that every wound is unique, and this is not a one-size-fits-all guide.

Some patients may have surgery to remove skin affected by HS. There are three main types of surgery: incision and drainage, deroofing and wide excision. Surgical treatment results in 'secondary' or 'post-surgical' wounds and need different care from the primary wounds that are caused by HS itself.<sup>5,7</sup>

**For the care of post-surgical wounds, please follow the specialist advice provided by your surgeon.**



There are three main types of HS lesions:



Nodule<sup>1,4,8</sup>

- A solid, raised bump under the skin
- Earliest and most common lesion in HS which is often painful



Abscess<sup>1,4,8</sup>

- A nodule which fills with pus
- Often painful, and may eventually burst



Fistula (or tunnel)<sup>1,4,8,9</sup>

- A tunnel which forms under the skin, sometimes connecting nodules and abscesses
- Often painful and drains liquids such as pus or blood

Is your lesion draining?  
Yes/No

If you have any questions about managing your wounds, do not hesitate to reach out to your doctor or wound care specialist within the dermatology department

If yes

- Use the table in this guide to learn about the different dressing options
- When choosing a dressing suitable for you, consider the location of your wound, how much pus is draining and if there is any odour<sup>5</sup>

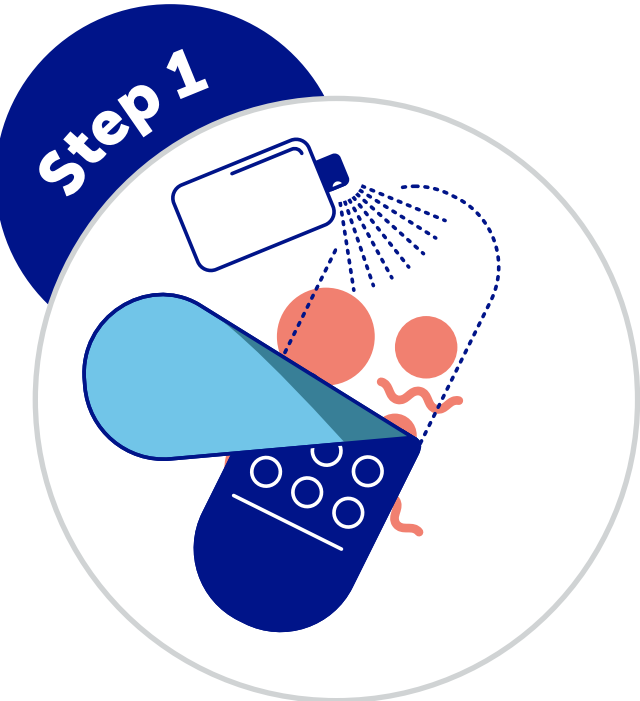
If no

- Regularly clean the affected skin using water and dab dry with a clean towel<sup>6</sup>
- Inspect the lesion for signs of infection such as increased redness, swelling, heat or discharge<sup>6,10</sup>
- There is no need to dress non-draining wounds, but a moist dressing may be soothing (see table)<sup>11</sup>

Images taken from Mendes-Bastos P, et al. Front Med (Lausanne). 2024;11:1403455. © 2024 Mendes-Bastos P, et al. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/medicine/articles/10.3389/fmed.2024.1403455/full>. Published in Frontiers in Medicine by Frontiers Media under the terms of a CC BY 4.0 license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. Modifications: Images D, E and F have been omitted.



# Changing your dressing: A step-by-step guide



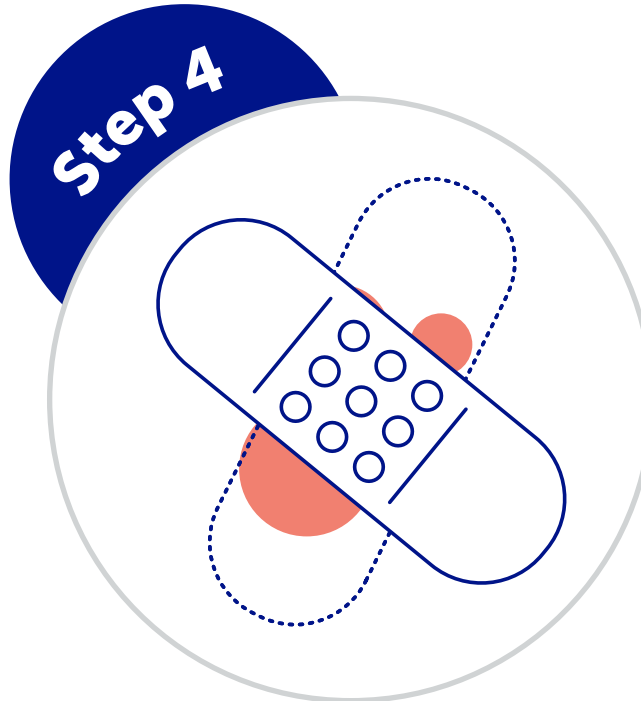
Slowly remove the existing dressing (preferably before showering), using an adhesive removal spray if necessary<sup>6,11</sup>



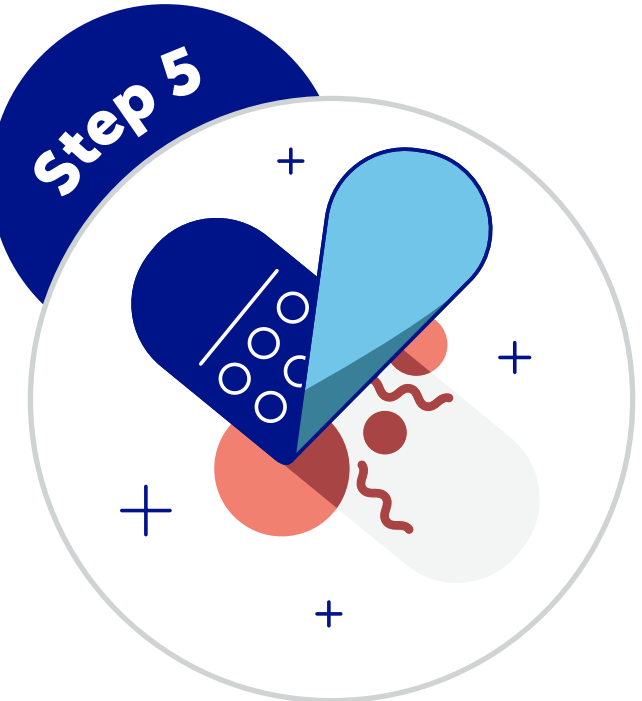
Clean the wound carefully using water and a clean towel or gauze to gently remove any crusting and dab dry<sup>6</sup>



Choose a dressing type that best suits your needs using the table in this guide to help you



Try to place your next dressing in a slightly different position from the one you removed to avoid irritating the surrounding skin



Carefully apply the new dressing

**Tell your doctor if a wound does not heal; this may mean your HS is not under control<sup>6,10</sup>**

**For odour control, remove the dressing, shower and then apply a specialised dressing containing a filter and charcoal as an absorbent. If the odour persists, consult your doctor<sup>11</sup>**

**Use dressing changes to check for signs of infection<sup>6</sup>**

# Top tips for the ideal wound dressing

For closed and painful lesions, discuss potential treatment options to relieve symptoms with your doctor<sup>5</sup>

1. Avoid woven gauze as it tends to stick to the wound and results in painful dressing changes<sup>6</sup>
2. If the skin around a lesion is sore, avoid very adhesive dressings which can pinch and injure the skin<sup>2,3</sup>
3. How often you shower and change dressings depends on your personal preference and the amount of pus draining from your wound<sup>6</sup>
  - If you have heavily draining wounds, you may need to shower and change dressings daily<sup>2,6</sup>

4. The thickness of the dressing you choose may depend on where your wound is located<sup>6</sup>
  - If your wound is in a fold of skin, thinner dressings may be more comfortable and prevent rubbing compared to bulky dressings<sup>6</sup>
5. Secure dressings can reduce rubbing and leaking<sup>3</sup>
6. For heavily draining wounds, ensure the dressing is larger than the wound site<sup>11</sup>

# Summary of available wound dressings [to be adapted for country-specific use]

Type	Subtype	Strengths		Weaknesses	When to use for HS
Moist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hydrogel<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Breathable<sup>11</sup></li><li>Flexible<sup>11</sup></li><li>Maintains moist environment<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cools and soothes skin<sup>11</sup></li><li>Can help with the healing process<sup>2</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Only able to absorb a small amount of pus<sup>11</sup></li><li>Can stick firmly to the skin<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Dry-to-minimal drainage<sup>11</sup></li><li>Inflamed nodules<sup>11</sup></li></ul>
Absorbent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Foams<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Flexible<sup>11</sup></li><li>Absorbs pus well<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Easy to remove<sup>11</sup></li><li>Waterproof (longer wear time)<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Can be expensive<sup>12</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Moderate-to-heavy drainage<sup>11</sup></li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Charcoal<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Controls odour<sup>11</sup></li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Could mask signs of infection<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Malodorous drainage<sup>11</sup></li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Hydrocolloid<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Breathable<sup>11</sup></li><li>Flexible<sup>11</sup></li><li>Can be cut to size<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Easy to remove<sup>11</sup></li><li>Absorbs pus<sup>11</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cannot absorb large amounts of pus<sup>13</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>None-to-minimal drainage<sup>11</sup></li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Superabsorbent<sup>6</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Absorbs large amounts of pus<sup>6</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Can help with the healing process<sup>6</sup></li></ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Moderate-to-heavy drainage<sup>6</sup></li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Calcium alginate<sup>6</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Absorbs large amounts of pus<sup>6</sup></li><li>Can help with the healing process<sup>6</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Can be worn for up to 3 days depending on the amount of drainage<sup>12</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Requires a second dressing to hold it in place and stop it from drying out<sup>12</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Moderate-to-heavy drainage<sup>6</sup></li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Gelling fibres<sup>6</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Absorbs large amounts of pus<sup>6</sup></li><li>Can help with the healing process<sup>6</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Can fit into areas difficult to dress<sup>2</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Possible allergic reaction<sup>14</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Moderate-to-heavy drainage<sup>6</sup></li></ul>
Anti-microbial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Silver<sup>15</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Kills bacteria<sup>15,16</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>May need less frequent changing<sup>15</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Only for use when there are signs of infection<sup>15</sup></li><li>Prolonged use may delay healing<sup>16</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Signs of infection<sup>15</sup></li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Iodine<sup>17</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Kills bacteria<sup>17</sup></li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>May irritate skin<sup>17</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Signs of infection<sup>17</sup></li></ul>



Superabsorbent foams are often suitable, and silicone adhesives tend to be gentle on the skin<sup>5,11</sup>

The content of this guide has been reviewed and endorsed by an expert HS wound care nurse.

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