

Questions to ask your dermatologist

Appointments are short, and hidradenitis suppurativa is hard to explain in ten minutes. This is the checklist I wish I'd had at my first visits: print it, tick what applies to you and bring it along. *You are not alone. Luca*

1 What to bring with you

- ☐ **Photos of your lesions during flares**, with dates: on the day of the visit your skin may be "quiet", and photos show what the doctor cannot see.
- ☐ **A written list of your flares**: how long they have been appearing, in which areas, how often, how long they last.
- ☐ **A list of medications and treatments you have already tried** (antibiotics, drainage, creams), with outcomes and dates.
- ☐ Reports from previous visits, recent blood work, any ultrasounds.
- ☐ Your **personal observations**: what seems to worsen or ease your flares (cycle, stress, sweat, friction, food).

2 Questions about the diagnosis

To understand where you stand and give things their proper name.

- ☐ Is this **hidradenitis suppurativa**? What distinguishes it from folliculitis, cysts or ingrown hairs in my case?
- ☐ Which **Hurley stage** does my situation fall into today?
- ☐ Are there **associated conditions** worth checking (metabolic, hormonal, gut-related)?
- ☐ Would a **skin ultrasound** help assess what is happening under the skin?
- ☐ Could you write the **full diagnosis in my records**? I will need it for insurance and future visits.

3 Questions about the care plan

The options are for you and your doctor to discuss: the goal is to leave with a clear plan.

- ☐ What **treatment options** exist for my stage and which makes sense to start with?
- ☐ What can I **realistically expect** from this treatment, and on what timeline?
- ☐ Which **side effects** should I know about, and which signs mean I should call back right away?
- ☐ Are **biologic therapies** an option for cases like mine? What are the criteria?
- ☐ Is surgery an option in my case? When is it considered?

4 Questions about daily management

- ☐ How do I manage a **flare** at home? What should I NOT do (squeezing, lancing, harsh disinfectants)?
- ☐ Any guidance on **hair removal, deodorants and clothing** for the affected areas?
- ☐ In my case, is it worth discussing **weight, smoking, diet**? With which specialist?
- ☐ Could my **menstrual cycle** or other hormonal factors play a role in my case?
- ☐ Can I do **sports and activities** normally, or are there useful precautions?

5 Practical questions and follow-up

- ☐ Is there a **dedicated HS clinic** at this institution or in my area? How do I get access?
- ☐ Does my **insurance** cover this condition and its treatments? What documentation helps?
- ☐ How often should we schedule **follow-ups**? Through a referral or direct booking?
- ☐ Who do I **contact between visits** if things get worse? (department phone/email)
- ☐ Can you point me to **reliable sources** and patient organizations?

Notes during the visit

Agreed next steps

Important note. I am not a doctor: this checklist comes from my experience as a patient, and its only purpose is to help you organize the conversation with your dermatologist. It is not medical advice and does not replace the opinion of a healthcare professional. Decisions about your care are made together with your doctor.