

FREE PRINTABLE GUIDE

HS Flare Kit

for the days a flare hits

First steps, the supplies to keep at home and a log to bring to your dermatologist.

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HS flare kit: what to do when a new lump shows up

When a nodule starts swelling it is hard to think straight. This kit puts in one place the basic steps the guidelines suggest for the first days, the supplies worth keeping at home and a log to bring to your dermatologist. Print it and keep it within reach. *You are not alone. Luca*

The first 48 hours

Simple steps to feel better while you wait for an appointment. They do not replace your doctor.

1. **Warmth.** A warm, not scalding, compress for about 10 minutes, a few times a day. It can ease the pain and may encourage drainage.
2. **Don't squeeze, don't pierce.** Pressing or opening a lump at home irritates the skin and can make it worse. If it needs draining, that is a job for a clinician.
3. **Less friction.** Loose, soft clothing over the area. Avoid seams, elastic bands and belts sitting right on the lump.
4. **Gentle washing.** Lukewarm water and a fragrance-free cleanser. No loofahs or scrubbing: pat the skin dry.
5. **Gauze if it drains.** If the lesion opens, cover it with sterile gauze held at the edges with medical tape, so no adhesive touches the lesion. Change it when it gets wet.
6. **A photo and two lines.** Take a dated photo and fill in the log on page 3. On the day of your appointment your skin may look calm.

In my case warmth eased the pain far more often than it opened anything.

When to call a doctor right away

- Fever, chills or feeling generally unwell
- Redness or swelling spreading around the lesion
- Pain or swelling that gets rapidly worse instead of waxing and waning
- A wound that drains heavily, smells bad or does not improve

Also tell your dermatologist about any wound that does not heal, reopens or keeps getting more painful. If you feel very sick, do not wait for the appointment: call your doctor, go to urgent care or call 911.

Keep at home

A box with the essentials saves you a pharmacy run on your worst day. Tick what you already have.

Dressings

- [ ] **Sterile gauze** and absorbent pads
- [ ] **Abdominal pads or panty liners**: with gauze, they are what dermatologists recommend most often
- [ ] A **non-stick contact layer** so the dressing does not stick to the wound
- [ ] **Gentle fixation**: tubular retention bandage, gauze wrap or snug cotton underwear
- [ ] A roll of **medical tape** to hold the gauze at the edges only, ideally silicone: it is gentler than acrylic adhesive

Skin and washing

- [ ] A **gentle fragrance-free cleanser**
- [ ] **Saline** or wipes to clean around the lesion
- [ ] **Zinc oxide** cream to protect the skin around the dressing
- [ ] A **fragrance-free moisturizer**
- [ ] If your dermatologist suggested one: an **antiseptic wash** (chlorhexidine 4%, benzoyl peroxide or zinc pyrithione). Read the label: chlorhexidine stays away from the genitals, eyes and ears. Benzoyl peroxide bleaches towels.

Armpits and clothing

- [ ] **Fragrance-free deodorant**, spray over stick: in a 2023 survey sticks were the format most often rated very harmful
- [ ] Nothing on **broken skin**
- [ ] **Loose cotton** clothing, darker colors work best
- [ ] Soft **spare underwear**

The bag kit, for work and days out

- [ ] 2-3 spare gauze pads and medical tape
- [ ] Wipes or saline
- [ ] A zip bag for used dressings
- [ ] A spare underlayer
- [ ] Dark clothing and a light jacket

Cost tip. If supplies are a burden, tell your dermatologist. Ask whether your wounds can be documented so dressings are prescribed or covered, or whether a wound care referral makes sense.

Flare log

One row per flare. After a few months you may see areas or moments that keep coming back. Bring it to your appointment with your photos.

DATE	AREA	PAIN 0-10	DRAINS	PHOTO	BEFORE THE FLARE	NOTES
				☐		
				☐		
				☐		
				☐		
				☐		
				☐		
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				☐		

Pain: 0 none, 10 worst imaginable. **Drains:** no, a little, a lot. **Before the flare:** stress, period, sweat, friction, food, poor sleep.

Why it helps. Appointments are short. A log with dates, areas and photos shows your dermatologist how often flares come back and how severe they are, even when your skin looks calm that day.

When lesions keep coming back

If a lump keeps returning in the same spot, talk to your dermatologist. These are options to discuss at a visit, not to choose on your own.

Steroid injection into the lesion. The North American guidelines list it for acutely inflamed nodules. The evidence is mixed: some studies report quick relief, a small controlled trial found it not clearly better than saline.

Incision and drainage. It gives quick relief when an abscess is badly inflamed, but the relief is short-term: in one surgical series, lesions treated with drainage alone recurred in essentially all cases.

Deroofing. A tissue-saving technique that removes the top of the nodule or tunnel. In one study, 83 percent of 88 deroofed lesions had not recurred after almost three years.

Treatments that control the disease. If flares are frequent or widespread, ask which treatments fit your stage.

Every time I pressed on a deep nodule, I got more inflammation, not less.

Before your visit

Download the free checklist of questions to ask your dermatologist.

flarebyflare.com/assets/checklist-questions-dermatologist.pdf

My story

The elimination diet and gradual reintroduction I followed is the chapter where my remission began. I tell the whole story in my book *Flare by Flare*. It is my experience, not a cure and not a promise.

flarebyflare.com/the-book

SOURCES

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- Poondru S. et al., dermatologist and patient surveys on HS wound care, 2023
- Survey on deodorant use in axillary HS, International Journal of Women's Dermatology, 2023
- van der Zee H.H. et al., *Deroofing*, JAAD 2010

Important note. I am not a doctor: this kit comes from my experience as a patient and summarizes guidance published by dermatology societies and health services. It is not medical advice and does not replace the opinion of a healthcare professional. For diagnosis and treatment, see your dermatologist.