

Hidradenitis suppurativa is more common than thought, only a few seek treatment

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A [new study](#) from the University of Oulu, Finland, published in the journal *Acta Dermato-Venereologica*, provides new insights into a skin condition called hidradenitis suppurativa (HS).

HS is a chronic, inflammatory [skin condition](#) that causes recurrent painful and draining cysts and nodules in the folds of the skin, such as the armpits, groin, genital area and buttocks. HS can significantly impair quality of life and is often associated with shame due to its symptoms.

The results of the study show that HS is more common in Finns than previously thought. The prevalence of the disease was previously estimated to be about 1%, but the new results suggest that up to four times as many [young adults](#), or 4% of the population, may be affected.

The study showed that HS is associated with severe obesity, female sex, smoking, and lower self-reported life satisfaction.

According to the study, most people with HS have not sought treatment for the disease, or it has not been recognized in health care for some reason. However, there are effective treatments for HS.

"HS should be better recognized and patients should be referred for treatment more quickly," said Laura Huilaja, MD, Ph.D., a dermatologist. "It is important that people with HS also have the courage to seek treatment, as there are [treatment options](#) available," she added.

The activity of the disease can be reduced by weight management and avoiding smoking. In addition to [lifestyle changes](#), HS can be treated with local treatments, systemic medications, and sometimes surgery.

"Often, a combination of different treatment modalities and a multidisciplinary team are needed in the treatment of HS," said Suvi-Päivikki Sinikumpu, MD, Ph.D., a dermatologist.

The study is based on a large cohort of people born in Northern Finland between 1985 and 1986. The members of the NFBC 1986 cohort participated in a comprehensive follow-up study in 2019–2020, which

included a health survey. The participants were then 34–35 years old. To determine treatment seeking, the study also used national health care registers.

No similar population-based studies of HS have been conducted before. Most previous studies have focused on patients already in specialized care, which has resulted in a selected study population that is typically biased towards patients with more severe symptoms. Due to the lack of studies, there has been no [accurate information](#) on the prevalence of HS before.

The researchers believe that the findings of the study have important implications for the management of HS. They recommend that health care providers should be more aware of the disease and that patients with HS should be encouraged to seek [treatment](#).

More information: Suvi-Päivikki Sinikumpu et al, Prevalence and Characteristics of Hidradenitis Suppurativa in the Northern Finland Birth Cohort 1986 Study: A Cross-sectional Study of 2,775 Subjects, *Acta Dermato-Venereologica* (2024). [DOI: 10.2340/actadv.v104.14732](https://doi.org/10.2340/actadv.v104.14732)

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