

LIVING WITH HS

A practical Patient Guide to Navigating Hidradenitis Suppurativa



Healing, Confidence, & Lifestyle
Tips from someone who's been
there

Faith Nazario

About the Author

Faith Nazario has lived with hidradenitis suppurativa for over 20 years. HS has affected far more than her skin. Over the years, it impacted her confidence, daily life, and her self conception .For much of that time, she was simply trying to get through it. She tried different approaches, searched for answers, and learned to live around the pain, the flare-ups, and the uncertainty that came with HS.

Eventually, she got tired of simply suffering through it. She started listening. Instead of only asking, "How do I get rid of this?" she began asking, "What is my body trying to tell me?" She started paying closer attention to her symptoms, tracking patterns, recognizing triggers, and learning what affected her personally. That shift changed the way she approached living with HS.

But her story is not meant to be emulated.

This guide was created from her journey, along with research, personal experience, and years of learning what did and did not work for her. Faith does not believe there is one formula for living with HS. What triggers one person's flares may not affect another person at all. Her hope is that by sharing her own experience, she can inspire others to become curious about their own bodies, track their symptoms, pinpoint their personal triggers, and advocate for themselves.

You know your body better than anyone. Start listening to it!

Connect with Faith

Have questions about the guide, want to share your HS experience, or interested in personalized one-on-one support?



Email:
faithsremission@gmail.com



Handle:
@faithyo3o

*“To everyone living with Hidradenitis Suppurativa
I see you. I honor you.
This isn’t a book about fixing HS.
It’s about living with it; honestly, fiercely, and without shame.
If you’ve ever felt alone or misunderstood,
I wrote this for you.
You deserve to be seen.
You deserve to be understood.
And you deserve hope...the kind that comes from knowing
you’re not walking this path alone.”*

-With Love, Faith

Disclaimer:

I am not a medical professional, and the information presented in this book should not be interpreted as medical advice. These pages reflect my personal experiences, the strategies I tried, and the outcomes I observed while managing hidradenitis suppurativa. Always seek the advice of a physician or qualified health provider with any questions regarding your health, symptoms, or before implementing dietary or lifestyle changes.

Table of Contents

Understanding HS	1
Fighting Back	2
Know Your Triggers	3
Severity & Stages	4
Food as Medicine: My Story	5
Daily Nourishment	8
Keeping Track	9
Flare Tracker	10
Treatment Journey	11
Movement & Healing.....	12
Reducing Daily Inflammation	13
Invisible Struggles	14
Intimacy Without Shame	15
Rest Is Part of Treatment	16
When a Flare Is Already There	17
What HS Can Look Like	19
What My Remission Looks Like	20
Works Cited.....	21

Understanding HS

HYDRADENITUS SUPPURATIVA

If you're reading this, you probably already know what Hidradenitis Suppurativa is. You've felt the pain, the swelling, the frustration of flares that seem to come out of nowhere. You've tried the antibiotics, the creams, surgeries, and the treatments that promise improvement but never seem to deliver lasting relief. You've googled treatments at 2 a.m. and maybe even been told to "just lose weight" or "manage your stress" (StatPearls).

I've been there. I've lived with HS for more than twenty years. Through pain so sharp it stole my sleep, through the scars, the shame, the loneliness of feeling misunderstood, and the days when just getting dressed felt like a victory. I've learned how to talk to doctors who don't understand, how to manage relationships when you feel "unlovable," and how to rebuild confidence after your body betrays you again and again. But here's the truth no one told me for years: your body can heal more than you've been led to believe. And yes, diet can matter (StatPearls; Cleveland Clinic).

I'm not a doctor or a nutritionist. I'm someone who got tired of suffering and started experimenting. Through trial, error, and a lot of persistence, I discovered that changing what I ate and how I cared for my body dramatically changed my HS. My flares became fewer and less severe, my energy came back, and my confidence followed. What I'm sharing isn't theory, it's field notes from a life inside HS.

This book isn't about false promises or miracle cures. It's about real, practical relief; the kind that comes from listening to your body, nourishing it differently, and reclaiming control over a condition that's taken too much already. In these pages, you'll find what I wish someone had told me:

- How to build a care routine that works with your life, not against it.
- What actually makes a difference, and what isn't worth your energy.
- How to handle intimacy, work, and self-esteem when HS makes you want to hide.
- How to approach HS holistically: managing pain, mindset, and diet together. And most importantly, how to stop seeing your body as broken and start seeing it as a story of survival.

Fighting Back

CREATING YOUR OWN TURNING POINT

When it comes to Hidradenitis Suppurativa, one frustrating truth remains: there is no single, clear-cut cause, and no guaranteed cure. If only it were that simple. What we do have, however, is a growing understanding of things that tend to trigger the body, stir inflammation, and push HS into overdrive (StatPearls). And that knowledge becomes power the moment you choose to act on it.

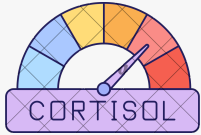
For years, I tried tackling HS the way many of us do: one change here, another change months later, hoping each would be the magic switch. It wasn't. HS is stubborn, and it rarely responds to half-efforts. But something shifted once I committed to doing the hard thing; fighting back on all fronts. Here's the part no one really talks about: once you *master* your diet, everything else begins falling into place almost naturally. Diet is the foundation. It's the stabilizer. When I cut out processed foods, it wasn't just my skin that changed; my energy changed, my mood changed, my cravings changed. My entire relationship with my body recalibrated. And with that new stability, I suddenly had the clarity and motivation to tackle the other triggers that had been quietly working against me.

That's when I began noticing all the small ways I had been making my HS worse without even realizing it. I changed my style by swapping out tight jeans and fitted pants for skirts, shorts, and looser fabrics that didn't rub or trap heat. One of the biggest shifts apart from diet came when I recognized stress as a real *silent* trigger. Normally, cortisol is supposed to help the body manage stress, but for people like us dealing with HS, it can be quite the opposite. Since our immune systems are constantly in overdrive, our bodies show more sensitivity to stress–cortisol cycles, turning everyday stress into inflammation (StatPearls; PMC – National Institutes of Health).

So while there may not be a cure, and while HS can feel unpredictable, you are not powerless. You don't have to wait for a miracle treatment, you can create your own turning point. Start with the thing that gives your body the best chance of healing: your diet. Once that's in order, you'll be surprised how naturally the rest begins to follow. Once you learn your body's triggers, and stop ignoring the little habits and pressures that quietly work against you, you finally begin taking your power back. When you fight back on all fronts, instead of piece by piece, your body notices.

Know your Triggers

AWARENESS IS THE FIRST STEP TO HEALING—UNDERSTANDING WHAT FUELS YOUR FLARES HELPS YOU TAKE BACK CONTROL



Cortisol, the body's main stress hormone, can worsen HS by disrupting the immune system's balance — chronic stress and elevated cortisol levels increase inflammation, leading to more frequent or severe HS flare-ups (PMC – National Institutes of Health).



Smoking stimulates nicotine receptors in the skin's hair follicles, which increases keratin production and causing follicles to clog. It also alters immune signaling—raising pro-inflammatory cytokines like TNF- α and IL-17—creating the chronic inflammation that drives HS lesions. (PubMed)



Wearing tight clothing can increase friction, heat, and irritation, which may worsen HS flare-ups. (StatPearls)



Hormonal changes can influence flares by making hair follicles more prone to clogging and triggering inflammation. This is why HS often worsens during puberty, menstrual cycles, or periods of hormonal imbalance (PMC – National Institutes of Health).



Diets high in dairy, refined carbohydrates, and processed foods may worsen HS symptoms (Cleveland Clinic; Springer).



Alcohol raises systemic inflammation. Increasing the production of cytokines, while disrupting the body's immune and hormonal balance (Cleveland Clinic).

Severity and Stages

THE HURLEY SCALE CLASSIFIES THE SEVERITY OF HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA INTO THREE STAGES BASED ON THE PRESENCE OF ABSCESSSES, TUNNELS, AND SCARRING.

HURLEY STAGE I: MILD

- Single or a few isolated abscesses or nodules.
- No sinus tracts (tunnels) or scarring.
- Lesions are typically separated and heal completely between flares.

HURLEY STAGE II: MODERATE

- Recurrent abscesses in one or more areas.
- Sinus tracts (tunnels) begin to form under the skin.
- Scarring starts to appear.
- Lesions may be widespread, but areas of normal skin still exist between lesions.

HURLEY STAGE III: SEVERE

- Repeated and interconnected sinus tracts and abscesses involving entire regions (e.g., underarms, groin).
- Extensive scarring and chronic inflammation.
- Significant pain, drainage, and mobility limitations.

(StatPearls)

TIP: Don't linger on what stage you're in! Instead utilize the knowledge to prevent/ treat future flares and become more in tune with your body.



Personal Photographs

Food as Medicine: My Story

MY PERSONAL JOURNEY AND TESTIMONY OF HOW MINDFUL EATING BECAME ONE OF MY GREATEST TOOLS AND HELPED ME FIND RELIEF

I didn't look into changing my diet until 2018. After looking at anti-inflammatory diets and trigger foods I decided to go Vegan. During this time I also underwent my first course of Accutane. I was shocked, I actually noticed some changes. The flares became less frequent and more localized. As time went on I began to incorporate things like chicken and non dairy cheeses. Just like that my body was back to flaring up per usual. I became discouraged, and ultimately accepted that my life will consist of constant suffering.

It was stealing my confidence and deteriorating my mental health, not to mention draining my bank account. I remember being in so much pain during thanksgiving 2024 due to a flare up. I couldn't even finish my plate. I had to go home and lay down because sitting seemed impossible. Like I've said before everyone is different. For the most part, my HS lesions don't tend to break the surface or drain. In turn, the inflammation goes inward creating a deep rooted cyst. The flare up prevailed until that following month. I ended up going to the ER to have emergency surgery. I was at my lowest physically, mentally, and spiritually. I noticed HS was consuming my life.

One night while researching, I focused on the ingredients of the foods that I consumed, and I came to the conclusion that I would cut out ALL processed foods. The Mediterranean diet is always recommended by health professionals for individuals like us with HS or other inflammatory issues But, let's be honest (Cleveland Clinic). Any time you attempted to change your diet did you really stick with it? I know I didn't. I would be disciplined up until the first flare. I told myself, "If changing my diet doesn't work, why not just eat what I want?"

That mindset is part of the problem. It takes time to see results with anything; whether it's going to the gym, learning a new skill, or even taking antibiotics. So if we know progress requires time, why do we rush the healing of our bodies? Don't think of it as a diet; think of it as a lifestyle change.

I also didn't make these changes overnight. I started gradually. First I got rid of dairy, processed candies, cakes, and cookies. Then I removed chips and crackers. Lastly, I cut out all red meat (StatPearls; Cleveland Clinic). That didn't leave me with many options, but I was determined. It was and still is the hardest thing I've ever had to do.

The cravings never stopped, my will power and desire for normalcy trumps them. How bad do you want relief? *We've all heard of "A moment on the lips is a lifetime on the hips"*. I like to think that similarly applies to us. When I'm craving or about to eat something that I know will cause a flare up I ask myself 3 questions:

- Will this cause me to flare up?
- If so, how long and how bad will the flare up be?
- Is this worth the physical and emotional pain?

I eat in a way that prioritizes inflammation reduction, gut balance, and nervous system regulation. My approach to food is simple, flexible, and rooted in listening to my body rather than following rigid rules. This isn't about restricting yourself, your body needs nourishment. It's simply a method I use to stay present and eat with intention. Instead of grabbing a granola bar that markets itself as "healthy" while hiding a list of twenty-plus ingredients with preservatives, try choosing something simple and real, like an apple with peanut butter or any fruit you love. Our bodies respond best to whole foods, not nutrient-poor snacks (Cleveland Clinic; Springer). And believe me, I say that as someone who has always been a snacker at heart. Food has been one of many tools that helps me feel more stable in my body. What works for me may not work for everyone, especially when living with a chronic condition. This section is meant to inspire awareness, not prescribe a specific diet.

Daily Nourishment

MY PREFERRED FOODS & DAILY EATING EXAMPLE

PROTEINS

- Chicken
- Eggs
- Fish (Cod, Sea Bass, Tuna, Wild Salmon)
- Turkey (*When tolerated*)

CARBOHYDRATES

- Rice
- Potatoes
- Sweet Potatoes
- Corn tortillas

FATS

- Avocado Oil
- EVOO
- Dark Chocolate (75-100% Cocoa)
- Nuts & Seeds

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

- Leafy greens
- Bananas
- Cucumbers
- Berries

FOODS I AVOID (PERSONALLY)

- Dairy
- Red Meat
- Processed Foods
- Fried Foods

A SAMPLE DAY OF EATING (Not a rulebook)

- **Breakfast:** Eggs, avocado, corn tortilla, fruit
- **Lunch:** Salmon arugula salad with onions, tomatoes, and olive oil
- **Snack:** Nuts or fruit
- **Dinner:** Sauteed Chicken, vegetables, rice
- **Snack:** Dark chocolate and fruit

Keeping Track

UNDERSTANDING YOUR HS ONE DAY AT A TIME— TRACK FLARES, PAIN, AND REMEDIES TO UNCOVER YOUR PERSONAL HEALING PATTERNS

The following table is what I used to track my flares, patterns, and treatments. Everyone's experience is different, but for me, a flare often begins with a tingling/itching sensation in the area, sometimes a burning feeling or a deep bruise-like ache. Whenever I felt *anything*, I made a note of it.

After logging enough flares, I began to notice my patterns and I hope you'll start to see your own, too.



Pros:

- Cold compress and icing helped calm my inflammation early on
- Advil over the counter provided temporary relief for me and reduced inflammation
- Loose clothing choices promoted faster healing
- Band-aids and gauze reduced friction and allowed for better mobility
- intermittent fasting helped my body regain metabolic and inflammatory homeostasis
- Daily topical clindamycin helped add another layer of protection

Cons:

- Dairy, gluten, red meat, sweets, processed snacks triggered my flares
- Hot compress/ hot baths exacerbated my symptoms
- Topical Clindamycin did not work once the flare began
- Stress made everything worse
- My flares seemed to start 1 week before my menstrual

[illegible]

Treatment Journey

THE TRIALS, THE ERROS, AND THE OUTCOMES

Each treatment or medication listed is broken into two key points. The first, How It Works, and the second, My Results, shares my personal experience with the treatment; what worked, what didn't, and any important observations from using it. This format lets you see both the general function of each treatment and the real-life outcomes I experienced.

Medication / Treatment	How It Works	My Experience / Results
Drawing Salves	Helps soften the skin, reduce inflammation, and encourage fluid or pus to move closer to the surface	Intensified flares by bringing them to the surface, but not softening the skin to allow for drainage.
Clindamycin (Oral)	Reduces bacterial overgrowth and inflammation.	Not for longterm use caused stomach upset & yeast infections
Clindamycin (Topical)	Topical antibiotic that reduces surface bacteria and mild inflammation.	Great for preventing flares and calming mild active ones.
Doxycycline	Tetracycline antibiotic that reduces inflammation and helps control flare cycles.	Slow to work; better for long-term maintenance. Caused stomach upset.
Spironolactone	Blocks androgens, which can reduce hormonally driven HS flares.	No more pre-cycle flares. Caused irregular periods and frequent lightheadedness.
Accutane (Isotretinoin)	Retinoid that decreases oil production and may help certain HS types.	Cleared hormonal acne. Caused intense headaches and lasting joint pain/stiffness.
Kenalog Injection (Triamcinolone)	Steroid injected into lesions for quick swelling and pain relief.	Painful injection; works within hours. Caused tissue atrophy at injection site.
Laser Hair Removal	Reduces hair follicles and friction, lowering flare risk in some cases.	Minor relief at first, then plateaued. Very expensive.
Rifampin	Antibiotic combined with clindamycin to reduce inflammation	Caused nausea and orange-red discoloration of urine and sweat. (can stain clothing)
Surgery / Drainage	Opens or removes lesions for immediate relief.	Instant relief but very painful; caused mild tissue atrophy.

Note: Mechanisms and medical facts in the “How It Works” column are sourced from StatPearls, National Center for Biotechnology Information, ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK534867/.

Movement & Healing

REDEFINING FITNESS WHEN YOUR BODY HAS LIMITS

Staying physically fit isn't just about looking a certain way it's about supporting your body on every level, including inflammation, immune health, and overall resilience. Research shows that exercise and lifestyle changes that help reduce body weight and systemic inflammation are associated with improvements in HS severity for some people, especially when combined with dietary changes and weight management strategies (StatPearls; Cleveland Clinic).

But here's the real truth: being active doesn't guarantee HS won't flare. I've been athletic my whole life. Playing sports, staying fit, and pushing my body, yet HS still showed up again and again. Fitness alone didn't protect me, and it isn't a silver bullet for HS. What does matter is understanding how movement interacts with your body's inflammatory response and the physical triggers unique to you.

One of the biggest contributors to flare-ups isn't just sweat, it's the friction and mechanical stress that happens when skin rubs against skin or tight clothing. Clinical observations suggest that mechanical stress, including friction and pressure on the skin, may play a role in HS lesion formation and flare severity (StatPearls; PMC – National Institutes of Health). Which is why reducing this kind of stress is recommended in managing symptoms.

At one point, when my HS flares were at their absolute worst, I was running three to four miles almost every day. I did everything I could to make it work ; wearing large bandages to reduce skin-to-skin friction, adjusting clothing, and pushing through discomfort because I believed staying active was always the answer. But despite my efforts, the abscesses kept coming. During that time, I shifted to less stressful forms of cardio. I walked on the treadmill at an incline, used the StairMaster, and even explored Pilates. Without initially realizing it, something changed. The flares in that area began to subside, becoming less frequent and less severe, until they eventually faded into the past.

You need to be intentional with the types of activity you choose, and to adapt workouts that support your body's health without unnecessary skin-to-skin contact. For people like us, low-impact exercises and activities that minimize friction, overheating, and repeated skin contact; such as swimming, walking, yoga, or strength training with controlled movements are often easier to integrate without provoking flares (StatPearls; Cleveland Clinic).

Reducing Daily Irritation

HOW CLOTHING, SKIN CARE, AND FRICTION AFFECT HS

Managing flares isn't only about what's happening inside the body, but also about what the skin is exposed to every day. The skin is our largest organ, and when it's already sensitive or inflamed, repeated contact with certain fabrics, products, and moisture can quietly add to irritation over time (StatPearls; PMC – National Institutes of Health). Clothing plays a bigger role than I once realized. Tight or restrictive pieces, especially jeans and some workout apparel, can increase friction, trap heat, and place pressure on areas prone to flares (StatPearls). I didn't eliminate these items completely, but I choose them thoughtfully. If I know I'll be sitting for long periods or won't have the opportunity to change, I opt for looser, more breathable clothing instead i.e. soft cotton, moisture-wicking fabrics, or flowy pieces that reduce friction.

Products with heavy fragrances, harsh exfoliants, or unnecessary additives can disrupt the skin barrier, clog pores, and irritate hair follicles and glands, especially in high-friction or flare-prone areas (StatPearls; Cleveland Clinic). I've learned to keep things simple. I gravitate toward gentle, dermatologist-recommended products like Cetaphil, CeraVe, and Hibiclens. I avoid heavily scented soaps in my hot zones altogether. Over time I realized that even small changes like switching laundry detergents, skipping fabric softeners, or choosing fragrance-free products, made a noticeable difference in how often I experienced flare-ups (Cleveland Clinic).

Healthy skin with HS isn't about layering products or scrubbing harder; it's about protecting the skin barrier, minimizing irritation, and choosing products that support the skin rather than overwhelm it. Listening to my skin, being patient with it, and adapting my routine to how I feel each day has been just as important as any topical treatment.



Invisible struggles

WHEN HOPE FEELS HEAVY

I spent countless sleepless nights buried in research, reading medical abstracts, forming theories, and searching for answers that might finally bring relief. HS is what pushed me toward the medical field in the first place. I majored in nursing and minored in psychology because I wanted access to as many corners of healthcare as possible. Deep down, I believed that knowledge might one day lead me to a cure, or at the very least, a pathway to comfort, not just for myself, but for others living with this condition.

Despite that pursuit of understanding, I lived in silence for years. For nearly eighteen years, I hid my HS from the world. I learned how to make excuses, cancel plans, and push through pain without explaining why. As my flare ups became more frequent and harder to conceal, that silence became unsustainable. I was running out of explanations, and more importantly, I was running out of energy.

December 2024 marked the first time I spoke openly about my HS in a professional setting. I told my boss and managers what had been happening; what had always been happening. They were shocked, not because they lacked compassion, but because they had no idea I had been suffering at all. By staying silent, I had unintentionally removed the possibility of support. Once the truth was out, something shifted. Within their limits, adjustments were made. A mesh ergonomic chair and a standing desk, small but meaningful changes that eased my daily discomfort. Not every workplace will respond this way, but the experience taught me something essential. Visibility matters. Closed mouths really don't get fed. Speaking up did not cure my HS, but it fundamentally changed how I moved through my life.

Living with HS has shown me how easily people fall through the cracks of systems built on visibility. Without disclosure, there is no documentation. Without documentation, there is no support. Advocacy is not only personal. It is structural. Claiming my voice became the first step toward reclaiming control.

Intimacy without Shame

NAVIGATING CONNECTION, BOUNDARIES AND SELF WORTH

HS doesn't just live on the skin...it settles into the mind. You may look at your body and notice flaws before beauty. You may replay memories of pain and flare-ups, wondering what it must look like from the outside, or whether anyone could truly understand what it's like to live in a body that feels unpredictable.

For me, those thoughts began quietly in my teenage years. I would sit in front of the mirror, critiquing my skin the way I imagined others might. Over time, HS became a constant inner voice, one that questioned my desirability, my worth, and my place in intimate spaces. It made closeness feel reserved for other people: people with easier bodies, clearer skin, fewer explanations. The fears were persistent. How do I explain this? Who could love me and my scars? What if I become a burden the moment my body needs care? These thoughts didn't disappear just because I learned to speak up publicly. If anything, intimacy required an even deeper level of honesty.

When it came to relationships, avoidance felt safer than vulnerability. I canceled plans, pulled away from physical closeness, and protected myself from potential rejection long before it could happen. Not only because of pain, but because of shame and the fear of being misunderstood in the moments when connection mattered most. Over time, I learned that intimacy doesn't begin with physical closeness; it begins with emotional clarity. Transparency became a way of protecting myself, not exposing myself. By sharing my experience before physical engagement, I gave myself the space to gauge understanding, respect, and safety before vulnerability.

Even when a partner is accepting, the shame can remain internal, like the feeling that your body has somehow become something you need to apologize for. Learning to separate my body from the shame I attached to it became an important part of reclaiming my identity. I didn't need to be ashamed of being seen. The conversations I once feared became grounding. They replaced assumption with clarity and anxiety with choice. Intimacy stopped feeling like something I had to earn or endure, and started to feel like something I could enter on my own terms.

Rest Is Part of Treatment

UNDERSTANDING STRESS, SLEEP, AND INFLAMMATION

Chronic stress and inadequate sleep can increase inflammation in the body, disrupt hormone balance, and weaken the immune system, all of which may contribute to more frequent or more intense flare-ups (StatPearls; Immunize Nevada). For a long time, I underestimated how much my nervous system played a role in my skin. Pushing through exhaustion, running on adrenaline, or staying in a constant state of stress often showed up physically before I even connected the dots.

Rest is foundational when managing HS. Sleep is when the body repairs tissue, regulates inflammation, and resets key systems that affect skin health (National Institutes of Health). When rest is compromised, the body has fewer resources available for healing. I didn't recognize how closely my flare patterns followed periods of exhaustion until I began prioritizing consistent, restorative sleep. Creating space for recovery, both physically and mentally, has allowed my body to respond better over time. With HS, slowing down isn't giving up, it's giving your body the conditions it needs to calm, repair, and protect itself.

One of the most eye-opening connections I've made between stress and HS came during a toxic relationship. Without fully realizing it at the time, I was living in a constant state of emotional tension, and that period aligned with the most severe flare-ups I've ever experienced. My body was rarely at ease, and my nervous system felt constantly activated. It wasn't until the relationship ended that my body was able to truly rest and find peace. Since then, I haven't experienced flares anywhere near the intensity I once did. Looking back, I can clearly link the severity of my symptoms to prolonged stress. It reminded me how important it is to be mindful of the people and situations we allow into our lives. Our bodies are already working hard to manage inflammation and heal, there's no need to place additional strain on them.

When a Flare Is Already Here

MY PERSONAL APPROACH TO NAVIGATING ACTIVE FLARES

When a flare shows up, the first thing I remind myself is this: I'm not failing. This happens. HS is unpredictable, and a flare does not erase the care or effort I've put in. Reassurance comes first, because panic only adds stress to a body that's already inflamed. Once I recognize an acute flare, my focus shifts to physical comfort and containment. What follows is simply what I do for my body, based on experience, not a recommendation for anyone else to follow. Everyone's HS behaves differently.

For pain and inflammation, I personally take ibuprofen. It helps take the edge off enough for me to function more comfortably during the early phase of a flare. In the past, I relied on hot compresses, but I've learned that heat exacerbates my symptoms. Now, I stick to cool compresses, which feel more soothing and help calm inflammation for me (National Institutes of Health). One of the most important things I practice during a flare is restraint. As difficult as it can be, I do not squeeze, pick, or manipulate my skin. I know firsthand how tempting it can be, especially when discomfort or pressure builds, but interfering with the area has consistently made things worse for me. Protecting the skin and allowing it to do its work has been a key part of my progress.

If a flare appears in a high-friction area, such as the bikini line, between the buttocks, or under the arms, I'll apply a large bandage. This reduces skin-to-skin contact and provides coverage in case of drainage, allowing me to move through the day with more comfort and confidence. Depending on the location and severity of the flare, I may also pause my workouts. This isn't about quitting or losing progress. It's about recognizing when movement could aggravate irritation rather than support healing, and giving my body the time it needs.

I can't stop flares completely, but if/when they do arise now, they tend to be less intense and resolve more quickly, often with minimal to mild discomfort. I believe this comes from addressing inflammation from multiple angles and becoming more aware of what I consume, what I apply to my skin, and how I respond when my body asks for care.

During flares, patience becomes just as important as any physical intervention. This is the time to slow down, soften your self-talk, and show your body extra love. Flares are when your body needs compassion the most, not criticism. Progress didn't come overnight for me. It came from consistency, self-awareness, and learning to work with my body instead of against it. If you're reading this, know that improvement is possible. With the right tools, support, and trust in yourself, you can build a relationship with your body that feels calmer, stronger, and more manageable.

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What HS can Look Like

IMAGES SHARED TO EDUCATE, VALIDATE, AND REMIND YOU
THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE.



Early inflammation





Peak flare

This was one of the worst and most painful flares I've experienced. It began in October 2024 and refused to calm down or drain for 2 months. I received 2 Kenalog injections with no relief. After a month with no progress I went to the ER and had an incision and suction-assisted drainage.



Healing Phase: Morning After



Post flare: 4 days later

What My Remission looks like

IMAGES SHARED TO EDUCATE, VALIDATE, AND REMIND YOU
THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE.



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