

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/dermconsult/breaking-the-cycle-the-role-of-stress-management-in-hs-care/67660/>

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Breaking the Cycle: The Role of Stress Management in HS Care

Announcer:

This is *DermConsult* on ReachMD. Today, Dr. Luis Garza will be explaining how stress can contribute to hidradenitis suppurativa, or HS, flares. Dr. Garza is a Professor of Dermatology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore. Let's hear from him now.

Dr. Garza:

It's really common that my HS patients tell me that their flares are associated with stress. And I think minimizing stress—as hard as it is in our life—is really important. And also, maximizing stress coping mechanisms is a part of this.

We don't fundamentally know exactly what it is. There's a real possibility, however, that it's actually the stress hormone itself that, at low levels, might make HS worse. And that's showing up in some of the research we're doing currently. So we think that it might not be something indirect from stress. It might actually be something direct, from circulating cortisol that might be, at low levels, stimulating HS.

There could also certainly contributions indirectly. We know when you have less sleep, your body tends to be at a higher level of inflammation, and inflammation is part of HS. We know that when people are stressed, they don't eat as healthily. And when people are stressed, they sweat more. So it's clear that a lot of this stuff that are risk factors for HS in our lifestyle are made worse by stress. So having stress coping mechanisms that are optimized and minimizing the stress in your life is really important for HS.

I think optimizing pain control is important. A lot of our HS patients are in serious pain. And while, as doctors, we have to be very careful about prescribing certain drugs like opioids, there are other drugs that can help a little bit, like non-steroidal drugs like aspirin, for example, and Tylenol. So finding ways for our patients to minimize their pain is important.

I tell patients that another way to minimize stress is to try to get ahead of the disease by seeing a dermatologist who has experience with HS and actively treating it. That can reduce the pain and the stress of the disease. So the treatment of the actual disease can really minimize stress. I tell my patients, a lot of it's like a cat chasing its tail, where, as your disease get worse and gets worse, your stress gets higher, and it can contribute to the disease more. So we want to cut off that cycle with counseling, disease care, and life coping strategies like spending time with family, trying to have downtime, meditation, and just trying to take care of yourself as best you can.

Announcer:

That was Dr. Luis Garza discussing the importance of stress management for patients with HS. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *DermConsult* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!