

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/diet-as-a-modifiable-risk-factor-in-hs-management/67658/>

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Diet as a Modifiable Risk Factor in HS Management

Announcer:

You're listening to *DermConsult* on ReachMD. On this episode, we'll hear from Dr. Luis Garza, who's a Professor of Dermatology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore. He'll be discussing the relationship between diet and hidradenitis suppurativa, or HS, flares. Here's Dr. Garza now.

Dr. Garza:

I think diet's a real fundamental thing for HS patients to think about. In some of our research, we've shown that there seems to be an association with processed foods—particularly the plastics that are associated with food packaging. Those might make HS worse. I firmly believe, and I counsel all my patients—and there seems to be a correlation that my patients tell me about—between the use of processed foods and flares and onset of HS.

So what I tell my patients is, you want to eat like it's 30 years ago or 40 years ago, because that's when HS was less common. And so we know that there's been a proliferation of processed foods and hyper-processed foods in our diet since then, and that might be an explanation. We think there might be factories of food that employ chemicals that are persisting in our food supply, and those chemicals are going to persist if you don't wash foods before you eat them.

What I tell my patients is, any food that you can wash is definitely safe. If you can wash a piece of chicken before you cook it, or some broccoli, we know that's totally safe. If you're eating a whole food that you can wash before you eat, then it doesn't have any of these potential chemicals that are making the HS worse.

But with the frozen pizza that my family loves—because I'm really tired when I get home, and I can just pull it out of the freezer, rip off the plastic, throw it in the oven, throw it on the table, and we all eat it—the problem is it has all the chemicals still from the factory. So I think that's the simplest thing: having less processed foods.

I think having a diet that's low inflammatory is also probably helpful—something that's a little bit lower in red meat and higher in fish and chicken as protein sources, with the majority of the diet, though, being fibrous vegetables, fruits, nuts, and olive oil. So having a diet that's rich in fiber and that includes things like salmon and fish is probably going to be a low inflammatory diet. A lot of these are going to overlap with the Mediterranean diet, for example.

A lot of my patients really do notice that there's sometimes very specific things that they think triggers their flares. And so, obviously, it's really good to notice that. I've had patients tell me, "Oh yeah, I was addicted to these chips, and once I started to stop the chips, my HS is a lot better." Or, "When I stopped getting fast food, my HS got a lot better." I think sometimes patients have things that are over-represented in their diet, and then they know that because of that, and when they stop them and their HS gets better, they can have that correlation and that connection that they can continue.

So I think patients can be paying a close attention to what makes their disease better and what makes it worse. If you cook at home more, you know what you're eating, you know all the ingredients more, and then you can really try to correlate changes. Keeping a diary is also something I tell patients—of what you're eating and when you get flares—and then that way you can try to find any connections.

Announcer:

That was Dr. Luis Garza talking about diet as a key part of HS care. 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!