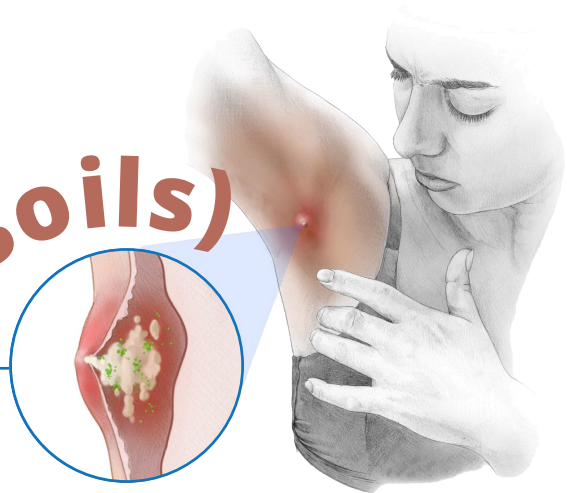


## Learn About Skin Abscesses (Boils)

By **Juan Guillermo Hoyos MD**  
Specialist in Dermatology  
Salud VID



### 1. What are boils, and what causes them?

Boils or skin abscesses are accumulations of pus that form when the skin attempts to fight off an infection. Boils are caused by bacteria that invade damaged skin through trauma, wounds, or cysts.

### 2. Who can get boils, and where are they located?

Boils are a very common skin condition that can occur at any age and in anyone. They are more frequent in people with weakened immune systems, high blood sugar, anemia, alcoholism, after trauma or accidents involving the skin, foreign objects in the skin, or poor blood circulation, among other factors.

Boils can appear on any part of the skin but are most commonly found on the neck, face, buttocks, thighs, and armpits.

### 3. How do boils manifest?

Boils appear as painful, warm, or red lumps on the skin that may feel hard or soft. They can be accompanied by swollen lymph nodes in the neck, armpits, or groin. In some cases, redness may spread to nearby skin, and symptoms may include fever, chills, or the discharge of pus.

### 4. What complications can boils cause?

Complications may arise when the infection spreads through the skin or bloodstream, or when the affected skin dies and turns black. Boils can also leave permanent scars.

### 5. How is the cause of boils determined?

A sample of the pus can be collected for analysis to identify the bacteria causing the infection. Blood tests may also be performed to check for underlying conditions that predispose the patient to boils.



## 6. When should you see a doctor?

You should consult a doctor if:

- Boils do not improve.
- They grow rapidly.
- They are very painful.
- They are accompanied by fever and/or swollen lymph nodes.
- They are located in sensitive areas such as the face.
- The patient has a weakened immune system or diabetes.

It is also important to seek medical attention if boils occur frequently in the same person. For these recurring boils, it is recommended to analyze the pus in a laboratory before starting treatment.

## 7. How are boils treated?

Patients can apply warm compresses to help the boil mature but should never squeeze it.



Treatment involves draining the pus, which must be done by healthcare professionals.

For large boils, a doctor may prescribe antibiotics.

Antibiotics should only be prescribed by a qualified healthcare provider. In some cases, intravenous antibiotics may be required, and the pus

may need to be drained in a surgical setting. These cases may necessitate hospitalization.

## 8. How can boils be prevented?

To prevent boils:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- Use personal towels and wash them often.
- Avoid sharing personal items like razors, clothing, or cosmetics.
- Take care of skin wounds by keeping them clean and covered.



## Web pages consulted

- MedlinePlus: Abscesses
- MSD Manuals: Folliculitis and Skin Abscesses
- Wikipedia: Abscess

Images taken from Freepik

### COMITÉ EDITORIAL

**Salud VID** • Danny Javier Robles Gómez - Director General • Juan Mario Jaramillo Acosta - Director Laboratorio Clínico  
 • Carlos Mario Cardona Betancur - Jefe Laboratorio Dental • Ana María Montoya Duque - Microbióloga  
 • Margarita María Montaña Hernández - Coordinadora Odontológica • Daniel Mauricio Castañeda Vargas - Coordinador de Mercadeo.  
**Organización VID** • Santiago Estrada Mesa - Asistencia, docencia e investigación.  
**Clínica Cardio VID** • Juan Carlos González Arroyave - Director Científico.

REVISIÓN Y DISEÑO Departamento de Comunicaciones Organización VID

Escanea el  
código QR y  
conoce todas las  
Cartas de Salud

