Shaving and the use of chemical depilatories, deodorants, and talcum powder have been implicated in the initiation of hidradenitis suppurativa. This study compared the use of these agents in the axillae and puboinguinoperineal (hereinafter called the inguinal) region of 40 patients with hidradenitis, prior to the onset of the condition, with their use in normal age- and sex-matched controls. No significant differences in the application of shaving, chemical depilatories, or deodorants at either site in patients with hidradenitis as compared with the normal controls were demonstrated. In both male and female controls there was an increased application of talcum powder to the axillae and inguinal regions as compared with patients with hidradenitis prior to the onset of the condition. We conclude that these agents are not primarily involved in the initiation of hidradenitis suppurativa.