



## Herpes Facts

### What is herpes?

Herpes is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (STIs) that can cause ulcerations (sores). There are two types of Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV):

- HSV 1 - generally causes sores on or near the mouth (cold sores).
- HSV 2 - usually causes sores on the genital area.

HSV-2 is present in about 20% of adults. Once infected, a person becomes a carrier for life. There is no known cure.

### How can you get it?

- HSV-2 is most commonly transmission by unprotected anal or vaginal intercourse
- It can also be transmitted from the mother to the baby during pregnancy and delivery
- HSV- 1 is most commonly transmitted by unprotected oral or genital sex and kissing mouth to mouth
- Up to 70% of all genital HSV-2 infections are transmitted when people are not having any symptoms or lesions. This is called “asymptomatic shedding.”

Note that condoms won't give total protection against HSV as the virus can be on other parts of the genitals or on the skin around the genitals which isn't protected by the condom.

### How do you know if you have it? Get tested!

Anyone can have one or more of these symptoms:

#### Primary Infection

- Flu-like symptoms including fever, headache and sore muscles
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Inflammation in the nervous system (aseptic meningitis) in up to one quarter of cases
- Pain while urinating
- Genital pain
- Presence of ulcers in the affected area
- Symptoms resolve after approximately 15 to 23 days

#### Recurrent Infection

- Slightly less severe than initial infection
- A slight tingling, itching, or burning may be a sign that an active outbreak is coming



- These can be triggered by stressors (such as illness, surgery, emotional stress), the menstrual cycle, sexual intercourse, surgery, and some medications
- Infection from oral sex can cause sores inside the mouth or on the lips of both men and women
- Symptoms typically appear within two to twenty days of infection
- Symptoms resolve after approximately 9 to 11 days

## Testing is the only way to find out if you have herpes or any STI.

Testing can be done at a health clinic by a health care provider; the procedure involves

- An examination of the active ulcerated area.
- A swab of the fluid from the sores - this test should be done with 48 hours after the sores are present.
- Women may also have an internal pelvic examination. Genital Herpes is not detected during a routine Pap Test or STI test, unless the sores are visible.
- A blood test can also detect HSV-1 or HSV-2 infections
- Sexual partners from the 60 days prior to prodrome onset should be informed if you had an outbreak of Herpes; they can consider blood tests to see if they carry Herpes as well.

## Treatment

- There is no known cure for Herpes
- Antiviral medication is available and effective to decrease the number, duration and severity of the outbreaks
- To be most effective these treatments must be started immediately after the prodrome symptoms (early symptoms) appear

## Prevention Recommendations

Use condoms and or dental dams properly every time you have sex

Avoid:

- Sexual intercourse and/or kissing if you or your partner is having any herpes symptoms
- Sharing bath or face towels when you and your partner have active sores;
- Using saliva to wet contact lenses if you have sores around your mouth.

Regular testing is recommended for those who have multiple sex partners, which can increase your risks of getting an STI.

