

Genital Herpes FAQ

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1. Genital Herpes FAQ

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What is genital herpes?

Genital herpes is a common infection generally transmitted through sexual contact. It is caused by one of two members of the herpes virus family, which also includes the viruses causing chickenpox, shingles, and glandular fever.

Genital herpes is usually caused by infection with herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2). Genital herpes can also be caused by HSV-1, the virus which more usually causes facial herpes, including cold sores on the lips.

Genital herpes, for most people, is an occasionally recurrent, sometimes painful condition for which effective treatment is available. Generally, it is not life-threatening and has no long-term repercussions on one's general physical health.

Treatment Sources:

1. Site selling discounted prescription antiviral medications
2. Site selling an effective topical application
3. Site for [herbs and relief supplements](#)

Anyone who is sexually active is at risk of catching genital herpes, regardless of their gender, race or social class.

How common is herpes ?

Most Americans have herpes, either as genital herpes, or as cold sores (oral herpes), the main difference is site of preference and social acceptance. Experts estimate that 60 million Americans have the virus that causes the genital form of herpes. In a recent study conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and The American Social Health Association, there are more than 15 million new cases of sexually transmitted infections each year. That's 41,095 people, newly infected, every day!

Up to 80 percent of Americans have the most common form of herpes (HSV-1) at some time. It usually appears as oral herpes and is most often spread without sexual contact.

What is “tingling”?

Many people who are newly infected will hear a common description of “tingling” in connection with outbreaks. Tingling has been described best as a sensation similar to that of a rub burn, scraping of the skin or a feeling that the muscle has gone to sleep.

“Tingling” sensations associated with Genital Herpes have been most common in the calf, thigh, buttocks or lower back. “Tingling” sensations associated with Oral Herpes have been most common in the neck, jaw-line or muscles surrounding the mouth.

How did I catch genital herpes?

Genital herpes can be transmitted through direct contact with an infected blister or sore, usually through sexual contact. It can also be transmitted when there are no symptoms present.

HSV-2 infection is usually passed on during vaginal or anal sex. HSV-1 is usually transmitted to the genital area by oral sex (mouth to genital contact). If you have only just been diagnosed as having genital herpes and are in a monogamous relationship, this does not necessarily mean that your partner has been unfaithful to you, or sexually promiscuous in the past.

It is possible for a person to carry the virus without knowing that they have it, since up to 80% of people who are infected with HSV-2 show no signs of the infection. So it is very easy for a person to unwittingly transmit the infection to their partner.

The symptoms of the infection vary greatly between individuals. It might be totally unnoticeable in one person, but cause severe blistering in their partner. Since the genital herpes virus can be transmitted through oral sex as well as vaginal sex, it is also possible to have caught the virus from a cold sore on your partner's mouth or face. It is possible to pass the virus on even if they did not have a cold sore present at the time of contact.

Alternatively, you may have contracted the virus from a previous sexual partner, perhaps even several years ago. The virus can remain inactive in the body for long periods, so this may be the first time it has caused symptoms. Or, previous symptoms may have been so slight that the herpes condition went unnoticed or was dismissed (e.g. a mild rash, itching or tingling).

How will genital herpes affect my relationships?

Because of the stigma wrongly attached to genital herpes, it has probably taken a great deal of courage for you to tell your partner that you have the infection.

You may find that the honesty and trust brought about by discussing genital herpes strengthens your relationship and brings you closer together. Support and understanding can help to overcome much of the anxiety that you may be feeling about genital herpes.

A good long-term relationship must be based always on honesty and trust. While some people may experience an unsupportive response, most have found their partners are both supportive and understanding.

What are the symptoms?

If you are having your first episode of genital herpes, you are likely to feel generally unwell and have fever, headache, and general joint and muscle aches, as well as irritation in the genitals.

This may last for several days, during or after which reddened areas may appear on the genitals. These may develop into painful blisters, which then burst, leaving sores which gradually heal, usually without scarring.

The severity of this first episode varies between individuals, but for some people it may be severe and last for up to three weeks if not treated. These symptoms should quickly resolve with treatment.

The doctor will probably give you a course of antiviral treatment. This is an effective medicine which, although it does not cure genital herpes, can speed recovery and reduce the severity of the episode.

Other forms of topical treatments are becoming increasingly popular, such as the topical solution Dynamiclear which works by eliminating the virus on contact with the outbreak. This solution works very well in ending herpes outbreaks, however you must have an active outbreak with sores or blisters for Dynamiclear to work properly. One benefit is that it is a "topical" application (applied onto the skin) so no nauseous pills are needed.

I personally recommend trying a treatment with all natural therapy to minimize the physical pain of the lesions while the prescribed antiviral does its job. [Herpeset](#)[™] has been reported to minimize the length of outbreaks as well as reducing associated pain.

For many people with genital herpes, the physical consequences of the infection are far outweighed by the emotional feelings it evokes. There are many misconceptions about genital herpes, including the belief that it is associated with promiscuity, and these have given it a reputation which may cause you to feel angry and shocked by the diagnosis. You may feel betrayed by your partner, or by a previous partner who may have transmitted the infection.

Anxiety, guilt, loss of assertiveness and fear of rejection are also common emotions. The support of a partner, friend, or family member can be very important in helping you to deal with these feelings and to minimize the effect of genital herpes on your life.

Do the symptoms return?

The symptoms of genital herpes may reappear from time to time. This is because once the viral infection is acquired, it stays permanently in the body. Most of the time the virus remains inactive, but every so often it may reactivate and cause another outbreak.

Each individual is different - some people never have a recurrence. Others may have recurrences several times a year. However, recurrent outbreaks are usually shorter and less severe than the first episode.

Certain events or situations can trigger recurrences, and you may be able to avoid or reduce the trigger factors, which may include stress at work or home, fatigue, ill health, loss of sleep, friction due to sexual intercourse, and menstruation in women.

If you have frequent or severe episodes of genital herpes, or if the recurrent outbreaks are causing a lot of anxiety for you, then you may benefit from suppressive (preventative) therapy, such as Valtrex®, which can help to prevent or reduce the frequency of recurrences. Other types of herpes treatments that can be effective include topical applications such as Dynamiclear® or Antiviral medications such as Acyclovir®, Famciclovir® and Valaciclovir®.

You can get natural homeopathic relief from the painful symptoms of herpes eruptions with [Herpeset](#)[™], a very special homeopathic blend of 9 ingredients, each known in the homeopathic community to safely reduce the discomfort caused by symptoms of Herpes Simplex Virus.

What can my partner and I do to reduce the risk of transmission?

If you take the necessary precautions, the chances of transmitting the virus to your partner are small. Genital herpes does not necessarily mean complete abstinence from sex or a reduced enjoyment of sex.

The risk of transmitting the virus may possibly be reduced if you use condoms. The continued use of condoms in a long-term relationship is a personal decision that only the couple can make. Most find that as the importance of the HSV infection in their relationship is seen in perspective, that condom use can become less relevant if this is the only reason condoms are being used.

However, at all costs couples should try to avoid sexual intercourse during an active episode of herpes, because this is when the virus is most likely to be transmitted. This period includes the time from when your partner first has warning signs of an outbreak, such as tingling or burning in the genitals, until the last of the sores has healed. Also, sexual activity prolongs the healing of the episode.

Transmission risk is increased if there are any breaks in the skin, for example, if you have thrush or small abrasions from sexual intercourse, often due to insufficient lubrication. It can be helpful to use a lubricant specifically for sexual intercourse and avoid sex if you have thrush. Sexual lubrication is helpful right at the start of sexual activity.

Sores in other areas, such as the buttocks and thighs, can be just as contagious as those in the genital area, and care should be taken to avoid direct contact with such sores during sex.

At other times, there is still a small risk of transmitting the infection, even if your partner is showing no signs of genital herpes. If you or your partner has a cold sore, it is advisable to avoid oral sex as this can spread the virus to the genitals.

You cannot catch genital herpes by sharing cups, towels or bath water, or from toilet seats. Even during an outbreak, it is only skin to skin contact with the parts of your partner's body which have the sores which you need to avoid. You can still cuddle, share a bed, or kiss.

Is there a cure for herpes?

Although the herpes virus is relatively easy to kill in a laboratory dish the problem arises because this virus hides itself inside an apparently normal host nerve cell until it has multiplied itself and is ready to migrate. This is when an outbreak occurs and the blisters appear.

Total cure is not out of the question and has been observed many times by patients and physicians. The sooner a treatment can begin after infection the greater the chance of overcoming the virus, so whatever treatment you decide on begin it soon and stick to it for a time. Besides the various treatments close attention to diet and general health is recommended.

You can get natural homeopathic relief from the painful symptoms of herpes eruptions with [Herpeset](#)[™], a very special homeopathic blend of 9 ingredients, each known in the homeopathic community to safely reduce the discomfort caused by symptoms of Herpes Simplex Virus.

How can symptoms be relieved?

Warm baths or wet tea bags (not herbal) may give relief. Loose cotton clothes will help prevent chafing. Keep the sores dry by sprinkling cornstarch in undergarments — moisture can slow healing. Holding cool compresses or ice packs to the sores may be soothing. Aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen may help relieve pain and fever.

A clinician may prescribe acyclovir, famciclovir, or valacyclovir. They may speed up the healing of sores and weaken the virus. Using these medicines during outbreaks themselves is called episodic therapy.

Relief product such as [Herpeset](#)[™] minimizes the physical pain of the lesions while the prescribed antiviral does its job. [Herpeset](#)[™] has been reported to minimize the length of outbreaks as well as reducing associated pain.

Can I catch herpes from toilets, or sharing soap, bath towels, etc ?

It is generally considered that the spreading of genital herpes through inanimate objects, such as soap, towels, clothing, bed sheets, toilet seats, and spa surfaces is highly unlikely because the herpes virus cannot live very long outside of the body.

In theory this virus will die very quickly once the temperature drops or the moisture around the virus dries up, but a scenario can be suggested where the temperature and moisture holds on long enough for the virus to survive outside the body for several minutes.

This could arise where an infected person leaves the virus in droplets of warm urine on the toilet seat and someone uses that toilet seat within a few minutes and has a cut that comes in contact with that pool of warm urine. To avoid this scenario wipe the toilet seat before using.

How do I know if I have genital herpes?

The usual symptoms of genital herpes begin with feeling generally unwell. You may have fever, headache, and general joint and muscle aches, as well as irritation in the genitals. This may last for several days, during or after which reddened areas may appear on the genitals. These may develop into painful blisters, which then burst, leaving sores which gradually heal, usually without scarring.

Signs of infection vary greatly between individuals and it is possible for you to show only mild symptoms that are not so easily recognizable as being genital herpes. These may include itching in the genital area, small cracks in the skin around the genitals, or reddened patches of skin in the genital area, thighs or buttocks, or you may have no symptoms at all.

Consult your doctor if you think you might be showing signs of the infection. Until recently, diagnosis could only be made by clinical symptoms and swabs to detect the virus during an active episode. However, blood tests are becoming commercially available that can distinguish between HSV-1 and HSV-2 antibodies.

The time taken to develop antibodies after initial infection is normally 8 to 12 weeks. It is also important to know that false positives and false negatives can occur with these tests.

Blood tests cannot definitively diagnose herpes, they can only tell you whether or not you are infected with HSV-1 and/or HSV-2, but cannot identify the site of infection. A swab taken from a genital site test is also required. If this tests positive, that is, the virus is detected, the diagnosis of genital herpes is confirmed.

Does Herpes cause cancer of the cervix?

No. Cervical cancer is associated with certain types of human papilloma viruses — but not the ones that cause genital warts. Pap tests can detect very early precancerous changes in the cervix. All women should have a Pap test at least once a year.

If I am pregnant and have genital herpes, will I pass it on to my baby?

Women with genital herpes can have healthy babies. However, it is possible, if you become infected during pregnancy or you have an outbreak at the time of delivery, to transmit the infection to your baby. Therefore, it is particularly important to take appropriate precautions to prevent becoming infected during pregnancy, particularly if your partner has genital herpes and you don't. It is strongly recommended that pregnant women who suspect that they may have genital herpes discuss this with their doctor or healthcare provider because there are precautions that can be taken to help protect the baby from infection.

Where can I get more information and advice?

After you have read this information, you might have specific questions or concerns. Your doctor should be able to answer such questions or recommend other experts who can provide advice and support. Continue to go back to your doctor until all your queries about genital herpes are answered.

In some areas, there are local genital herpes support groups that can be a valuable source of information and support. Ask your doctor if there is such a group in your area.

If you want further information regarding herpes, you can contact:

National Herpes Hotline
(919) 361-8488

National Herpes Resource Center
<http://www.ashastd.org/hrc>
herpesnet@ashastd.org

American Social Health Association (ASHA)
P. O. Box 13827
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709-3827
1-800-783-9877

2. Answers to Questions about Genital Herpes

Genital herpes is also referred to as Herpes simplex virus 2, HSV-2 or herpes pro-genitalis. It is a very common Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) that is generally spread by skin-to-skin contact.

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- [What is the connection between cold sores and genital herpes?](#)
- [How does a person get genital herpes?](#)
- [What causes or "activates" a recurrence?](#)
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Is genital herpes common?

If you have genital herpes you are definitely not alone. Genital herpes is extremely common. In fact, it is so prevalent that in America one out of every five of the adolescent and adult population are infected.

The statistics are just as alarming in the UK and Australia. An estimated 1 in 4 people in the UK are diagnosed with genital herpes and one out of every six adults in Australia.

A recent US survey reported that genital herpes is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases in the world, with a 32% rise in infections between 1978 - 1990.

What is the connection between cold sores and genital herpes?

Cold sores and genital herpes are both caused by the Herpes simplex virus (HSV), however, they are usually caused by different strands of the virus.

Cold sores are typically caused by Herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1).

Genital herpes on the other hand is usually caused by a different strand of the virus called Herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2).

Even so, it is possible to transfer the different virus types to other areas of the body.

HSV-1 (or cold sores) can be transferred to the genitals through oral sex. In the same way, HSV-2 (or genital herpes) can be transferred to the mouth.

How does a person get genital herpes?

Genital herpes is generally contracted from skin to skin contact with an infected area. For example, if someone has a genital herpes infection they can pass on the virus to another person by touching or making contact with the area, such as through vaginal, anal or oral sex, or by rubbing against the infection.

Once infected with genital herpes, the virus remains inside the body in a latent (sleeping) state. Throughout a person's life the virus can then become "activated" causing a genital herpes recurrence.

What causes or "activates" a genital herpes recurrence?

There are many factors that can influence or "trigger" a genital herpes outbreak, however, it seems to be related to times when the immune system is lowered or run down.

Genital herpes outbreaks can sometimes be triggered by the following:

- Being run-down
- Suffering from other genital infections (affecting the local skin area)
- Menstruation Cycle
- Pregnancy
- Drinking a lot of alcohol
- Exposure of the area to strong sunlight
- Conditions that compromise a person's immune system (where the body's immune system is not functioning normally)
- Prolonged periods of stress
- Fatigue
- Ultraviolet light
- Friction or damage to the skin, caused by, for example, sexual intercourse, may also lead to a recurrence
- Skin irritation (such as sunburn)
- Surgical trauma
- Diet and certain foods
- Another illness (especially with fever)
- Temperature extremes
- Steroid medication (e.g., asthma medication)
- Anything that lowers your immune system or causes local injury can trigger recurrences.

Some psychological factors:

- Emotional upset and stress
- Periods of prolonged stress can cause more frequent recurrences
- It is also common to experience stress and anxiety as a result of having recurrences.

What are some of the symptoms of genital herpes?

Before a genital herpes infection appears the area will sometimes tingle, feel slightly raised and may appear red and inflamed.

During a primary genital herpes episode (the first outbreak) it is common to feel flu like symptoms, such as swollen glands, headache or fever. Aching or 'tingling' sensations in the groin, thigh and buttocks muscles may also occur.

Itching, pain and tingling sensations called the prodrome (or warning symptoms) typically occur 1 to 2 days before any sores appear.

A genital herpes infection will generally appear as a small, fluid-filled blister which goes through a cycle of phases. The blister will usually weep (ulcerate) and form a scab or 'crusting' before healing and disappearing completely.

Genital herpes symptoms can vary from person to person and can sometimes resemble blisters, bumps, cuts, sores, or a rash in or around the genital area.

The symptoms of a genital herpes infection may last as long as six weeks, but the typical duration of an outbreak is three to fourteen days.

Although a person has been infected with the herpes virus, they may not necessarily ever experience an outbreak. This is because some people's immune systems have the ability to completely suppress the virus.

Is genital herpes contagious?

Yes, genital herpes is caused by the Herpes simplex virus and if the virus particles are transferred to another person they too can become infected.

Genital herpes is typically spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with the virus. Oral sex, intercourse and rubbing against the infected area are common examples of how the virus particles can be transferred.

It is important to use latex condoms or latex barrier protection in-between outbreaks for additional protection (please see your doctor for alternative barrier methods if you're allergic to latex).

The herpes virus does not pass through latex condoms, and when properly used latex condoms are likely to reduce your risk of spreading or getting herpes, however even the best condoms do not guarantee total safety.

When herpes sores occur in places not covered by a condom the condom is of little help, if any. Condoms and foams should not be relied upon when herpes sores or symptoms are present.

Condoms do not guarantee 100% protection because a lesion may be found which the condom did not cover. Used consistently, however, condoms are one of the best available forms of prevention.

How is the genital herpes virus spread?

Herpes is not spread through vaginal fluids, blood, semen or saliva. It is also not spread through the air like a flu virus. It is spread by direct contact with the Herpes simplex virus particles.

It is important to take precautions during an active genital herpes outbreak to prevent the virus from spreading. Herpes treatment can help to shorten the duration of the outbreak dramatically.

Genital herpes can be transmitted through direct contact with an infected blister or sore, usually through sexual contact. It can also be transmitted when there are no symptoms present.

HSV-2 infection is usually passed on during vaginal or anal sex. HSV-1 is usually transmitted to the genital area by oral sex (mouth to genital contact).

It is possible for a person to carry the virus without knowing that they have it, since up to 80% of people who are infected with HSV-2 show no signs of the infection.

So it is very easy for a person to unwittingly transmit the infection to their partner. The symptoms of the infection vary greatly between individuals. It might be totally unnoticeable in one person, but cause severe blistering in their partner.

Since the genital herpes virus can be transmitted through oral sex as well as vaginal sex, it is also possible to contract the virus from a cold sore on a partner's mouth or face. It is possible to pass the virus on even if they did not have a cold sore present at the time of contact.

Alternatively, a person can contract the virus from a previous sexual partner, perhaps even several years ago. The virus can remain inactive in the body for long periods, so this may be the first time it has caused symptoms. Or, previous symptoms may have been so slight that the herpes condition went unnoticed or was dismissed (e.g. a mild rash, itching or tingling).

When is genital herpes most contagious?

Herpes is considered to be most contagious when the blisters have burst open and have begun to weep fluid. This is because the liquid held in these blisters contains literally millions of herpes simplex virus particles.

During an outbreak, the population of virus particles becomes less and less as the herpes sore runs its course. There is a much smaller amount of virus particles present when the sore is healing and when the scab has formed.

However, as there are still virus particles present throughout every phase of the herpes outbreak the infected area is still considered contagious until the skin has completely healed.

If you know that you have come into contact with the virus in the past few minutes or so (e.g. if you or your partner have just touched an infected area) the simple action of washing your hands and the infected area with soap and warm water can help to sweep away the virus from your hands and other areas. By doing this you can help avoid the virus from spreading further.

Can the virus be transferred to another area of the body?

One kind of complication involves spreading the virus particles from the location of an outbreak to other places on the body by touching the infection. The fingers, eyes, and other body areas can accidentally become infected in this way.

Preventing self-infection is simple. Do not touch the area during an outbreak. If you do, you're your hands as soon as possible with soap and warm water. This will help prevent the virus from spreading further.

Where do genital herpes sores usually appear?

Typically, if there is a recurrence a herpes sore will occur in the same location as it did previously, or closely nearby.

Nerves can have many axons which is why the herpes virus can take a number of pathways to your skin. This is why outbreaks can sometimes appear in different areas nearby to one another.

Each nerve has a particular area of skin that it serves, called a dermatome, so the herpes lesions are limited to the dermatome it initially infected, unless you auto-inoculate (self-infect) yourself somewhere else.

How do I know if what I have is genital herpes?

Genital herpes can be mistaken for many different conditions and should always be diagnosed professionally.

If you suspect that you have herpes, but have not had your condition diagnosed, it is important that you visit your health care provider for a professional analysis.

Are there conditions that can be mistaken for genital herpes?

Yes. People often presume that they have a particular condition without getting a professional diagnosis.

This is a very risky approach as not only can herpes symptoms appear differently in each person, but, herpes can also be confused with many other infections.

If you have possible symptoms of an STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) it is important that you visit a health care provide for their professional opinion.

Also, a serious condition could get overlooked or you may be worrying yourself over a harmless irritation, but, without a diagnosis you will never know for sure.

What is the difference between Genital Herpes and Genital Warts?

Genital warts is an STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Genital herpes is a completely different condition, caused by the Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV).

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) is a viral infection of the skin and is sometimes also called anogenital warts, condylomata acuminata, genital or venereal warts.

There are approximately 30 types of HPV that are spread through sexual contact and can infect the genital area. This virus can cause growths of skin-colored, cauliflower-like masses of various sizes and shapes.

The symptoms of genital warts may occur several weeks to months after being exposed to the virus and include itching or burning around the genitals and painless growths (usually on damp or moist surfaces of the body) beginning as tiny and soft pink or red spots.

The spots usually develop into small white, yellow or gray 'bumpy' warts on the genitals or anus. These warts can grow quickly into irregularly shaped cauliflower-like masses.

[Wartrol Homeopathic Genital Wart Relief](#) is a reliable way to solve your problem.

In comparison, the herpes virus generally develops into a fluid filled blister which ulcerates, begins to form a dry scab and then heals. Before the lesion appears the area can become inflamed, itchy and sometimes red. Burning and tingling sensations are commonly felt with an outbreak.

Once a person has contracted herpes the virus will remain in the body. Most of the time when Herpes sores are not present on the skin the virus remains in a latent (sleeping) state in the central nervous system, where it does no damage.

When the virus reactivates (wakes up), it travels nerve paths to the surface of the skin, sometimes causing a breakout of symptoms on the skin's surface, otherwise known as an outbreak. View Pictures of Herpes

What does a diagnosis for genital herpes involve?

If you have noticed symptoms that could be caused by the herpes virus you should visit your Doctor as soon as possible, while symptoms are still present.

Your Doctor will examine your condition and should take a swab or sample of the infected tissue. This can be analyzed for herpes.

There are several tests that are used to diagnose herpes, some are more accurate then others. Methods of testing include diagnosis by:

- Viral Culture
- Serologic tests (Blood tests)
- Antigen Tests

Some clinics will use diagnostic tools other than the recommended tests. Among these, two are generally not recommended; the Tzanck test and the Pap Smear, neither of which is a specific test for herpes.

Tip: If you have active symptoms and the sores have not yet healed you should ask your Doctor for a specific virus culture or assay for the herpes virus. Blood tests are generally used in cases where no symptoms are present.

What is the best genital herpes treatment?

Herpes can be a very difficult ailment to treat and what works for one person may not necessarily work for the next. To manage herpes successfully there are four things that can be of great help:

1. An appropriate diet, avoiding foods that can trigger an outbreak
2. Avoid known outbreak triggers
3. Choose a Herpes Treatment that works well for you -- an effective treatment should assist in healing the symptoms rapidly and help to prevent future recurrences
4. Get our [Herpes Relief Product](#) for safe and easy ways to help relieve the pain

AND Talk About It!- It sounds simple, but sharing your negative thoughts and feelings about the condition and letting out some of the bottled up emotions that you have can do you AND your body a world of good.

There are many people who you can talk with, who can listen and offer sound advice. A good place to start are Meet People With Herpes, an online confidential greeting service specially for people affected by HSV. This service is very reputable and now has over 40,000 members worldwide.

What can I do to prevent genital herpes?

To minimize the risk of spreading herpes to a partner these simple steps will help:

1. Tell your Partner

It is important for you and your partner to understand what herpes is, how it can be prevented and which precautions are best.

By talking honestly and openly about the condition you will be able to work together to prevent infection.

2. Avoid Sexual Contact during an Outbreak

During an active outbreak the herpes virus is considered to be contagious from the very first sign of an outbreak (including the tingling, itching stage) until the area is completely healed again.

Herpes is most easily spread when a sore is present, but, the virus can also be spread at other times too. Some people notice itching, tingling or other sensations before they see anything on their skin.

These are called "Prodromal Symptoms" and they warn that the virus may be present on the skin. Herpes is most likely to be spread from the time these first symptoms are noticed until the area is completely healed and the skin looks normal again.

It is important to avoid any contact with the infected area during this high risk time. This includes oral sex, intercourse or rubbing against the area.

3. Limit the Number of Sexual Partners

By having sex with a non-infected partner who has sex only with you (mutual monogamy) you can greatly reduce the risk of spreading and contracting herpes.

4. Use Latex Condoms

Many couples have had sexual relations for years without transmitting herpes. Some simply avoid having sexual contact when signs or symptoms are present, while others also use condoms or other protection between outbreaks to help protect against asymptomatic shedding.

Condoms offer useful protection against herpes, protecting or covering the mucous membranes which are the most likely sites of infection. However, condoms do not provide 100 % protection because a lesion may be found which the condom did not cover. Used consistently, however, condoms are one of the best available forms of prevention.

5. Talk to your Doctor or Naturopath

Discuss the option of taking a herpes suppressive medication, such as "Valtrex" or talk to a Naturopath about the natural herb formula Immune Support. Both of these have been proven to reduce viral shedding, minimizing the risk of transmitting the virus when there are no symptoms.

6. Healthy Living

By taking better care of yourself you can help your body defend against the virus, reducing the possibility of an occurrence. Good rest, moderate exercise and fresh fruit and vegetable juices will assist in boosting the immune system (your body's natural defense system against viruses, such as herpes).

3. Answers to Questions about Cold Sores

Cold sores are also commonly known as **oral herpes**, **fever blisters** or **herpes labialis**. They are lesions that occur on the mouth, lip and facial area and are caused by the Herpes simplex virus.

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- [How common are cold sores?](#)
- [Where do cold sores usually appear?](#)
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- [When are cold sores most contagious?](#)
- [What is the best cold sore treatment?](#)
- [What can I do to prevent cold sores?](#)

Are cold sores really "herpes"?

Yes. cold sores are caused by a type of the herpes virus, but, it is rarely the same virus strand that causes genital herpes.

Cold sores are typically caused by Herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV1).

Genital herpes on the other hand is usually caused by a different strand of the virus called Herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV2).

However, it is possible to transfer the different viruses to other areas of the body. HSV1 (or cold sores) can be transferred to the genitals through oral sex. In the same way, HSV2 (or genital herpes) can be transferred to the mouth.

How common are cold sores?

Cold sores are very common. It is estimated that 80% percent of the American population have been exposed to the Herpes simplex virus (which is the virus that causes cold sores).

An interesting fact is that although a person has been infected with the herpes and cold sore virus, they may not necessarily experience an outbreak. This is because some people's immune systems have the ability to completely suppress the virus.

Where do cold sores usually appear?

Cold sores are usually confined to the mouth area (particularly on and around the lip).

Less commonly, cold sores can occur on other facial areas such as above the mouth, the nose, nostrils, cheek or chin.

Cold sores can also appear on the fingers, this is referred to as 'Herpes Whitlow'.

Cold sores do not usually occur inside the mouth, however if they do, it is most likely on the gums or hard palette (roof of the mouth).

If the lesion appears inside the mouth, especially on the soft tissue, it is most likely to be a canker sore, not a cold sore.

When cold sores reoccur they will typically appear in the same location that they did during previous outbreaks.

The difference between Canker sores & Cold sores

Cold sores or fever blisters are caused by the herpes simplex virus and are usually relatively easy to identify. To view pictures of the herpes virus (including cold sores and mouth herpes) visit our Herpes Pictures page.

There is another condition which can cause ulcers inside the mouth known as Canker sores. Canker sores are not a form of herpes, however, they are often confused and mistaken for cold sores.

Canker sores are ulcerations, especially of the lip or oral mucosa and can be caused by acute stress, trauma to the area in your mouth, allergies, or by a reaction to a particular bacteria.

Canker sores are not considered to be contagious. Cold sores and mouth herpes on the other hand are caused by the herpes simplex virus and can be very contagious.

If you are experiencing ulcerations on or inside of your mouth please visit your health care provider for a professional diagnosis. These two conditions can appear very similar and should not be self-diagnosed.

How do you get cold sores?

Cold sores are generally contracted from skin to skin contact with an infected area.

For example, if someone has a cold sore on their lip they can pass on the virus to another person's mouth through kissing.

The usual incubation period of the virus (time before any symptoms show) is approximately two to twelve days after the first exposure to the virus.

As most people contract cold sores before the age of seven, it is common for a person not to remember their first or 'primary' cold sore outbreak.

Once infected with cold sores, the virus remains inside the body in a latent (sleeping) state. Throughout a person's life the virus can then become "activated" causing a cold sore recurrence.

What causes or "activates" a cold sore recurrence?

There are many factors that can influence or "trigger" a cold sore outbreak, however, it seems to be related to times when the immune system is lowered or run down.

Cold sore outbreaks can sometimes be triggered by the following:

- Being run-down
- Menstruation Cycle
- Pregnancy
- Drinking a lot of alcohol
- Exposure of the area to strong sunlight
- Conditions that compromise a person's immune system (where the body's immune system is not functioning normally)
- Prolonged periods of stress
- Fatigue
- Ultraviolet light
- Skin irritation (such as sunburn)
- Diet and certain foods

- Another illness (especially with fever)
- Temperature extremes
- Steroid medication (e.g., asthma medication)
- Anything that lowers your immune system or causes local injury can trigger recurrences.

What are some of the symptoms of a cold sore?

Before a cold sore appears the area will sometimes tingle, feel slightly raised and may appear red and inflamed.

This pain or tingling sensation is called the prodrome (or warning symptom) and typically occurs 1 to 2 days before the cold sore appears.

A cold sore generally appears as a small, fluid-filled blister which goes through a cycle of phases. The blister will usually weep (ulcerate) and form a scab or 'crusting' before healing and disappearing completely.

The duration of a typical cold sore outbreak may last from 8 to 12 days.

Are cold sores contagious?

Yes. Cold sores are caused by the Herpes simplex virus and, if the virus particles are transferred to another person they too can become infected.

Cold sores are typically spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with the virus. Kissing or rubbing against the infected area are common examples of how the virus particles can be transferred.

How is the cold sore virus spread?

If a person has an active cold sore on their lip the virus particles can be transferred to any part of the body that they kiss, including the mouth, face or the genitals.

Keeping this in mind, it is very important to avoid kissing and oral sex during an active bout of cold sores.

It should also be made aware that the virus is considered to be contagious from the very first sign of an outbreak (including the tingling, itching stage) until the area is completely healed again.

It is important to take precautions during an active cold sore outbreak to prevent the virus from spreading. Cold Sore Treatments such as [Herpeset](#)[™], Dynamiclear and Zovirax can help to shorten the duration of the outbreak dramatically.

Herpes and cold sores are most easily spread when a sore is present, but, the virus can also be spread at other times too. Some people notice itching, tingling or other sensations before they see anything on their skin.

These are called "Prodromal Symptoms" and they warn that the virus may be present on the skin. Herpes is most likely to be spread from the time these first symptoms are noticed until the area is completely healed and the skin looks normal again.

Contact with the infected area (including oral sex, kissing and touch) is very risky during this time.

It is also possible to transmit virus particles to another person through intermediate objects such as a drinking glass, eating utensil, lip stick, lip gloss, toothbrush, or even a face cloth.

Can cold sores be spread to other body areas?

One kind of complication involves spreading the virus particles from the location of an outbreak to other places on the body by touching the infection. The fingers, eyes, and other body areas can accidentally become infected in this way.

Preventing self-infection is simple. Do not touch the area during an outbreak. If you do, you're your hands as soon as possible with soap and warm water. This will help prevent the virus from spreading further.

When are cold sores most contagious?

Cold sores are considered to be most contagious when the blisters have burst open and have begun to weep fluid. This is because the liquid held in these blisters contains literally millions of herpes simplex virus particles.

During an outbreak, the population of virus particles becomes less and less as the cold sore runs its course. There is a much smaller amount of virus particles present when the sore is healing and when the scab has formed.

However, as there are still virus particles present throughout every phase of the cold sore outbreak the infected area is still considered to be contagious until the skin has completely healed.

If you know that you have come into contact with the virus in the past few minutes or so (e.g. If you or your partner have just touched an infected area) the simple action of washing your hands and the infected area with soap and warm water can help to sweep away the virus from your hands and other areas. By doing this you can help avoid the virus from spreading further.

What is the best cold sore treatment?

Please visit our [Herpes Treatments page](#) to read reviews on relief products available. In the meantime, below are some home remedies that can temporarily help to relieve the symptoms:

- Ice can be applied to the sores to both numb and soothe the area, as well as lower the temperature of the infection, helping to inhibit the virus.
- Cold tea bags applied to the infected area every hour may be beneficial. This is because tea bags contain tannic acid which is thought to have antiviral properties, best used at the first sign of an outbreak.
- Petroleum jelly and other lip moisturizers can soothe and moisten the lips, helping to prevent the cold sore scabs from cracking and bleeding.

What can I do to prevent cold sores?

To help reduce cold sore outbreaks, try the following steps:

1. Be Sun Smart

Exposure to sunlight and ultraviolet rays can trigger a breakout of cold sores. To help protect yourself wear a hat when you are outside in the sun and use a lip balm that contains sunscreen (preferably one with an SPF rating of 15+ or higher).

2. Moisturize

Damage to your lips can bring on an episode of cold sores, so it is important to keep your lips protected from chapping and wind burn. A moisturizing lip balm can help here.

3. Choose an Effective Treatment

The right management of your cold sores can make a huge difference. An effective cold sore treatment should shorten the duration of your outbreaks, as well reduce the possibility of a recurrence. Visit the [Cold Sore Treatments page](#) to read through different products available for cold sores and herpes outbreaks.

4. Healthy Living

By taking better care of yourself you can help your body defend against the virus, reducing the possibility of an occurrence. Good rest, moderate exercise and fresh fruit and vegetable juices will assist in boosting the immune system(your body's natural defense system against viruses, such as herpes).

4. Herpes Transmission Facts and Tips

- [Spreading and Preventing Herpes](#)
- [When can the herpes virus be spread?](#)
- [Can the virus be spread to other body areas?](#)
- [How can a person contract Genital Herpes?](#)
- [How can a person contract Cold Sores?](#)
- [Is it possible to prevent herpes infection?](#)
- [Is genital herpes spread from sharing drinks, towels, etc?](#)
- [What steps can I take to help prevent transmission?](#)
- [Is there or will there ever be a drug to stop the virus from being transmitted?](#)

Spreading and Preventing Herpes

Yes. It is possible to have a sexual relationship and NOT spread the herpes virus if the necessary precautions are taken.

Herpes often brings about some changes in a couple's sex life, such as abstaining from sex during outbreaks. For most people with herpes, this occurs only a few times a year and, if a suitable treatment approach is undertaken, you can expect even longer periods between outbreaks.

When can the herpes virus be spread?

Herpes is most easily spread when a sore is present, but, it is also often spread at other times too. Some people notice itching, tingling or other sensations before they see anything on their skin. These are called "Prodromal Symptoms" and they warn that the virus may be present on the skin.

Herpes is most likely to be spread from the time these first symptoms are noticed until the area is completely healed and the skin looks normal again.

Contact with the infected area (including oral, vaginal, or anal sex) is very risky during this time.

If there are no symptoms occurring in the infected area at the time of contact there is still a small chance of spreading the virus because occasionally the virus can shed itself at the skin's surface (in the area of infection). This referred to as Viral Shedding.

Although it is impossible to predict when viral shedding is occurring it is estimated that it only occurs approximately 5% of days during the year (possibly even less after having the virus for a long period of time) and this is usually during the few days just before, during and after an outbreak.

It is important to use latex condoms or latex barrier protection in-between outbreaks for additional protection (please see your doctor for alternative barrier methods if you are allergic to latex).

The herpes virus does not pass through latex condoms, and when properly used latex condoms are likely to reduce your risk of spreading or getting herpes, however even the best condoms do not guarantee total safety.

When herpes sores occur in places not covered by a condom the condom is of little help, if any. Condoms and foams should not be relied upon when herpes sores or symptoms are present.

Condoms do not guarantee 100% protection because a lesion may be found which the condom did not cover. Used consistently, however, condoms are one of the best available forms of prevention.

Can the virus be spread to other body areas?

Yes, you can spread herpes to other body areas (self re-infection) BUT.... it is unlikely and IF it happens it is most likely to happen only during the first "primary" outbreak.

Self re-infection to other body areas (also called auto-inoculation) is unlikely during recurrences and fairly uncommon in general -- so be sensible but don't let paranoia ruin your day!

One kind of complication involves spreading the virus from the location of an outbreak to other places on the body by touching the sore(s) and then transferring the virus particles.

As mentioned above, this is most likely to be a possibility during the first "primary" outbreak or if there is an open cut or break in the skin present, which could allow the virus easier access to transmit.

The fingers (herpes whitlow), eyes (ocular herpes), and other body areas can accidentally become infected in this way.

Preventing self-infection is simple. Be mindful of transmitting the virus to other skin areas where there is broken skin and be mindful not to touch the area during an outbreak. If you do, wash your hands and the area that you have touched as soon as possible with soap and water, this will help to prevent the virus from spreading further.

How can a person contract Genital Herpes?

Genital herpes can be transmitted through direct contact with a herpes infection (such as an infected blister or sore), usually through sexual contact such as oral, vaginal or anal intercourse.

Herpes can also be transmitted when there are no symptoms present. Since the genital herpes virus can be transmitted through oral sex as well as vaginal sex, it is also possible to contract the virus from a cold sore on a partner's mouth or face.

It is possible to pass the virus on even if they did not have a cold sore present at the time of contact.

To help prevent transmission it is important not to touch an infected area during an outbreak. If you do, wash your hands as soon as possible with soap and water, this can help prevent the virus from spreading further.

How can a person contract Cold Sores?

Cold sores are generally contracted from skin to skin contact with an infected area.

For example, if someone has a cold sore on their lip they can pass on the virus to another person's mouth through kissing.

The usual incubation period of the virus (time before any symptoms show) is approximately two to twelve days after the first exposure to the virus.

As most people contract cold sores before the age of seven, it is common for a person not to remember their first or 'primary' cold sore outbreak.

Once infected with cold sores, the virus remains inside the body in a latent (sleeping) state. Throughout a person's life the virus can then become "activated" causing a cold sore recurrence.

Is it possible to prevent herpes infection?

Yes, definitely. Many couples have had sex for years without transmitting herpes. Some simply avoid having sexual contact when signs or symptoms are present, while others use condoms or other protection between outbreaks to help protect against asymptomatic viral shedding.

If you take the necessary precautions, the chances of getting the virus from your partner are small.

Genital herpes does not necessarily mean complete abstinence from sex or a reduced enjoyment of sex.

The risk of transmitting the virus may possibly be reduced if you use condoms. The continued use of condoms in a long-term relationship is a personal decision that only the couple can make.

Most couples find that as the importance of the HSV infection in their relationship is seen in perspective, that condom use can become less relevant if this is the only reason condoms are being used.

However, at all costs couples should try to avoid sexual intercourse during an active episode of herpes, because this is when the virus is most likely to be transmitted. This period includes the time from when your partner first has warning signs of an outbreak, such as a tingling or burning in the genitals, until the last of the sores has healed. Also, sexual activity can prolong the healing of the episode.

Transmission risk is increased if there are any breaks in the skin, for example, if you have thrush or small abrasions from sexual intercourse, often due to insufficient lubrication. It can be helpful to use a lubricant specifically for sexual intercourse and avoid sex if you have thrush. Sexual lubrication is helpful right at the start of sexual activity.

Sores in other areas, such as the buttocks and thighs, can be just as contagious as those in the genital area, and care should be taken to avoid direct contact with such sores during sex. At other times, there is still a small risk of transmitting the infection, even if there are no signs of genital herpes.

If you or your partner has a cold sore, it is advisable to avoid oral sex as this can spread the virus to the genitals.

Is genital herpes spread from sharing drinks, towels, etc?

You cannot catch genital herpes by sharing cups, towels or bath water, or from toilet seats. Even during an outbreak, it is only skin to skin contact with the parts of your partner's body which have the sores which you need to avoid. If you or your partner has genital herpes, you can still cuddle, share a bed, or kiss.

What steps can I take to help prevent transmission?

In a sexual relationship with a person who has herpes, the risk of contracting the infection will never be zero. However, these steps can greatly reduce the risk:

- 1) *Tell Your Partner.* It is important to understand what herpes is; how it can be prevented; which precautions are best; what are the social and emotional impacts of herpes. If it is an option, try to avoid any sexual contact if you are infected (abstinence).
- 2) *Avoid sex in the few days before, during and just after an outbreak* as herpes is most contagious during this time. Some couples have sexual relationships for years without transmitting herpes, just by avoiding sexual contact when signs or symptoms are present.
- 3) *Limit the number of sexual partners.* By having sex with a non-infected partner who has sex only with you (mutual monogamy).
- 4) *Use Latex Condoms and Dental Dams between outbreaks.* Condoms offer useful protection against herpes, protecting or covering the mucous membranes which are the most likely sites of infection. However, condoms do not guarantee safety. The herpes sore or lesion is not always located in an area covered by the condom.

5) *Talk to your Doctor about taking a herpes suppressive medication, such as “Valtrex” or talk to a Naturopath about the natural herb formula Immune Support. Both of these have been proven to reduce herpes viral shedding, minimizing the risk of transmitting the virus when there are no symptoms.*

Is there or will there ever be a drug to stop the virus from being transmitted?

Some experts believe that developing an effective HSV vaccine is the only practical way to control the disease and the spread of infection, and if such a vaccine becomes available then universal immunization may be the best approach.

Various vaccines are in clinical trials or pre-clinical development, including mutated strains of herpes virus that cannot replicate, inactivated herpes virus, and DNA vaccines that use genetic fragments of the virus to trigger an immune response. Creating such a vaccine, however, is complex and difficult.

There are often new trials commencing in all areas of treatment and participants are always in high demand. The web sites below should be able to point you in the right direction if you are interested in following the progress of these:

<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/dmid/stds/herpevac>

<http://www.centerwatch.com/search.asp>

Certain herbs and tablets can help to reduce the risk, for example, Olive Leaf (found in the herb Formula “Immune Support”) and prescription medications (such as “Valtrex” and “Acyclovir”) have been proven to reduce viral shedding and the growth rate of the virus, which can in turn help to reduce the risk of transmission.

You can get natural homeopathic relief from the painful symptoms of herpes eruptions with [Herpeset™](#), a very special homeopathic blend of 9 ingredients, each known in the homeopathic community to safely reduce the discomfort caused by symptoms of Herpes Simplex Virus.

5. The Herpes Talk

Telling a Partner about Herpes

Although herpes is not usually life-threatening it can be life-altering and so you have a responsibility to inform your partners of the possibility of infection.

When it comes down to the basics of telling there is no foolproof method. What you say and how you say it are going to depend on your own personal style. It is only natural to feel apprehensive about telling someone else about genital herpes for the first time.

Carefully choose the time and place for telling someone. Although it may not be necessary to tell someone right at the beginning of a relationship, do not wait until after a serious relationship is established as this is not fair to the other person.

If your partner does decide not to pursue a relationship with you simply because you have herpes, it is in your best interest to find out now. It takes a lot more than the occasional aggravation of herpes to destroy a sound relationship.

Some Practical Tips:

- The discussion could take place where you feel safe and comfortable. Some people turn off the TV, take the phone off the hook, and approach the subject over a quiet dinner at home. Others prefer a more public place, like walking in the park, or a quiet restaurant, so that their partner will feel free to go home afterwards to think things through.
- Be prepared. Plan what is going to be said and have your facts about genital herpes clear. It can be a good idea to have relevant printed information on hand for someone to read.
- Be spontaneous. Be confident. You are doing the right thing for both of you. By telling your partner you allow them to enter into the relationship with full knowledge of your infection.
- Consider how you would feel if the roles were reversed and you were being told.
- You can also role play the situation with a friend who already knows your situation, but do not let them always play the understanding partner. Convincing another person can help convince you.
- Your attitude will influence how this news is received. Psychologists have observed that people tend to behave the way you expect them to behave, and expecting rejection increases the chances of an unhappy outcome.

Personal rejection, with or without herpes, is a possibility we all face. Fear of rejection can lead some to question why they should risk talking about herpes and choose not to disclose the fact. Instead they abstain during outbreaks, practice safe sex at other times, and hope for the best.

This negative way of thinking can have more disadvantages than advantages:

- You spend a lot of time and energy worrying that your partner is going to get herpes.
- The longer you put off telling, the more likely your partner will find out elsewhere.
- It gets harder to do the longer you wait
- For most people, the anxiety of not telling is worse than the telling itself.
- Excuses create distance between partners and often lead to dangerous guesswork. Your partner might interpret your excuses in ways more damaging to the relationship than an honest discussion of genital herpes would be

Keep in mind that all relationships face challenges, many far tougher than herpes. Good relationships stand or fall on far more important issues -- including communication, respect, and trust.

6. Herpes Treatments

How to find a treatment that actually works for “you”.

The following shows a list of reputable Herpes Treatments that are known to work effectively for many people

List of reputable Herpes and Cold Sore Remedies:

Prescription Antiviral Medications(pills)

Dynamiclear (topical)

Healing Natural Oils(topical)

Lysine and Supplements(diet and nutrition)

Alkaline and Acid Food Theory(diet and nutrition)

Boost the Immune System(antiviral immune herbs)

[Herpeset™](#) (*pain relief and home remedies*)

What to AVOID when looking for a Herpes Remedy

There are many herpes treatments available and finding one that works best for you will be a personal choice. In your search for a herpes treatment, consider these points:

1. Genital herpes can be mistaken for many different conditions and should always be diagnosed professionally. It is important to know exactly what condition you are treating before looking for possible solutions.
2. Antibiotics will have little to no effect on a herpes condition. This is because herpes is a virus; antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections and are useless on viruses.
3. Cortisone or Steroid based creams and medications are NOT recommended to be used on herpes conditions. Although they may seem to work initially they are actually contraindicative for herpes and can cause the outbreak to ‘flare up’ and become worse.
4. DMSO based products are NOT recommended. There is much skepticism about the safety of DMSO and so we always recommend that people considering using this substance do their research thoroughly before using it.
5. Be wary of any herpes product that claims to “cure” the herpes virus. Although many products can help to overcome the symptoms of herpes there is always a small risk of transmission because of Viral Shedding. Because of this factor, it is impossible for any treatment to claim that it is a cure for herpes. Such claims should be treated with caution.

Current testing methods cannot determine if a person is cured of the virus because these tests work by detecting the levels of “antibodies” in the bloodstream. Antibodies are the immune system’s memory responses and, once exposed to a condition, they will remain in a person’s body for life to protect them in case of a future attack.

If you try a treatment and do not find it helpful do not be disheartened. Many people with herpes need to try more than one treatment before they find one that works best for them.

According to a survey conducted by the American Social Health Association (1991), most patients with Herpes try between two and five different therapies.

These include:

- Prescription drugs
- OTC "cold sore" treatments
- Topical solutions

- Herbal remedies
- Vitamins and supplements
- Nutritional changes
- Psychotherapy
- And more

Scientists are still searching for a herpes cure, but now you can get natural homeopathic relief from the painful symptoms of herpes eruptions with [Herpeset™](#), a very special homeopathic blend of 9 ingredients, each known in the homeopathic community to safely reduce the discomfort caused by symptoms of Herpes Simplex Virus.



Take Advantage of our Best Offer Ever
[Get 2 Free Bottles!](#)

7. Preventing Herpes

Prevention methods, precautions and practical advice when dealing with Herpes

- [Is it possible to prevent herpes infection?](#)
- [Can I catch this virus from toilets, or sharing soap, bath towels, etc?](#)
- [Herpes outbreaks and recurrences](#)
- [Steps to greatly reduce the risk of infection](#)
- [What about condoms and foams?](#)
- [Can the Herpes Simplex Virus \(HSV\) spread to other parts of the body?](#)
- [What about Herpes Vaccines?](#)

Is it possible to prevent herpes infection?

Many couples have had sexual relations for years without transmitting herpes. Some simply avoid having sexual contact when signs or symptoms are present, while others use condoms or other protection between outbreaks to help protect against asymptomatic shedding.

If you take the necessary precautions, the chances of getting the virus from your partner are small. Genital herpes does not necessarily mean complete abstinence from sex or a reduced enjoyment of sex.

The risk of transmitting the virus may possibly be reduced if you use condoms. The continued use of condoms in a long-term relationship is a personal decision that only the couple can make.

Most couples find that as the importance of the HSV infection in their relationship is seen in perspective, that condom use can become less relevant if this is the only reason condoms are being used.

However, at all costs couples should try to avoid sexual intercourse during an active episode of herpes, because this is when the virus is most likely to be transmitted. This period includes the time from when your partner first has warning signs of an outbreak, such as a tingling or burning in the genitals, until the last of the sores has healed. Also, sexual activity prolongs the healing of the episode.

Transmission risk is increased if there are any breaks in the skin, for example, if you have thrush or small abrasions from sexual intercourse, often due to insufficient lubrication. It can be helpful to use a lubricant specifically for sexual intercourse and avoid sex if you have thrush. Sexual lubrication is helpful right at the start of sexual activity.

Sores in other areas, such as the buttocks and thighs, can be just as contagious as those in the genital area, and care should be taken to avoid direct contact with such sores during sex.

At other times, there is still a small risk of transmitting the infection, even if there are no signs of genital herpes.

If you or your partner has a cold sore, it is advisable to avoid oral sex as this can spread the virus to the genitals.

You cannot catch genital herpes by sharing cups, towels or bath water, or from toilet seats. Even during an outbreak, it is only skin to skin contact with the parts of your partner's body which have the sores which you need to avoid. You can still cuddle, share a bed, or kiss.

Transmission (spreading the herpes virus)

HSV can be passed on when one person has the virus present on the skin or mucous membrane and another person makes direct skin-to-skin contact with the live virus.

The herpes virus is likely to be present on the skin from the first sign of prodrome (tingling or itching where the outbreak usually occurs), until the sores have completely healed and new skin is present.

There are likely to be certain periods of time (possibly only a few days out of the year) when the active virus might be on the skin, even though there are no obvious signs or symptoms.

Always using latex condoms may possibly reduce the risk of transmitting the virus at these times.

Herpes is very frequently transmitted by infected persons who do not know they are infected.

Once diagnosed, a person generally is able to take the simple precautions necessary to protect partners - avoiding contact during prodrome or an outbreak and practicing safer sex when no symptoms are present.

Can I catch the herpes virus from toilets, or sharing soap, bath towels, etc?

It is generally considered that the spreading of genital herpes through inanimate objects, such as soap, towels, clothing, bed sheets, toilet seats, and spa surfaces is highly unlikely because the herpes virus cannot live very long outside of the body.

In theory this virus will die very quickly once the temperature drops or the moisture around the virus dries up, but a scenario can be suggested where the temperature and moisture holds on long enough for the virus to survive outside the body for several minutes. This could arise where an infected person leaves the virus in droplets of warm urine on the toilet seat and someone uses that toilet seat within a few minutes and has a cut that comes in contact with that pool of warm urine. To avoid this scenario wipe the toilet seat before using.

Herpes Outbreaks & Recurrences

People who experience an episode (outbreak or recurrence) of herpes, either facial or genital, should consider themselves infectious from the start of the episode to the healing of the very last ulcer.

To gain relief from frequent recurrences, [antiviral treatment](#) may help. It can prevent some recurrences and provide valuable 'breathing time' in which people can learn to strengthen their own resources.

For some people who have active blisters or sores the outbreaks can be ended, with fairly rapid healing time and sometimes little to no reoccurrences by using topical medications such as Dynamiclear

Steps to greatly reduce the risk of infection:

In a sexual relationship with a person who has herpes, the risk of contracting the infection will never be zero. However, these steps can greatly reduce the risk:

Tell Your Partner. It is important to understand what herpes is; how it can be prevented; which precautions are best; what are the social and emotional impacts of herpes. Try to avoid any sexual contact if you are infected (abstinence).

Avoid sex during outbreaks as herpes is most contagious during this time. However, some couples have sexual relationships for years without transmitting herpes, just by avoiding sexual contact when symptoms are present.

Limit the number of sexual partners

By having sex with a non-infected partner who has sex only with you (mutual monogamy).

Use Latex Condoms between outbreaks. Condoms offer useful protection against herpes protecting or covering the mucous membranes, the most likely sites of infection.

However condoms do not guarantee safety. The herpes sore or lesion is not always located in an area covered by the condom.

What about condoms and foams?

Laboratory studies show that:

The herpes virus does not pass through latex condoms

When properly used latex condoms are likely to reduce your risk of spreading or getting herpes, however even the best condoms do not guarantee total safety.

When herpes sores occur in places not covered by a condom the condom is of little help, if any

Condoms and foams should not be relied upon when herpes sores or symptoms are present

Spermicidal foams and jellies may offer additional protection. Spermicides used in contraceptive foams, film and gels kill or neutralize HSV in laboratory tests and may provide some protection when used in the vagina (recommended dose the same as for contraception).

Some contraceptive foams contain ingredients (such as nonoxynol-9) that kill the herpes virus and other STD's in test tubes

Foams are best used along with condoms, not in place of condoms

Condoms do not provide 100 percent protection because a lesion may be found which the condom did not cover. Used consistently, however, condoms are one of the best available forms of prevention.

Women with any sexually transmitted disease (STD) may be at greater risk of developing cervical cancer than other women. All women should have regular Pap Smear tests at least once a year as early cell changes can be detected by Pap smears.

Visit a local sexually transmitted disease (STD) clinic, hospital, doctor or health professional.

Can the Herpes Simplex Virus (HSV) spread to other parts of the body?

Avoid contact with any herpes blister, sore or abrasion because of the highly contagious nature of this virus. Even if the blister is elsewhere on the body and not directly located on a sexual organ.

The fingers, eyes and other body areas can be accidentally infected by touching the sores. In this way the virus can spread to other areas of the body.

Preventing self-infection is simple: do not touch the area during an outbreak, if you do, wash your hands immediately with soap and warm water. This will prevent the virus from spreading further.

What about Herpes Vaccines?

U.S. researchers have produced an effective vaccine for genital herpes for the first time, offering hope that the spread of the incurable disease, which affects one in five adult Americans, can be limited.

The vaccine prevented infection in 74 percent of women exposed for the first time to the genital herpes virus, known as herpes simplex virus type 2.

But the vaccine didn't work at all in men, researchers reported, adding they were not sure why.

The Stanberry team's test included 978 women and 1,736 men whose partners had genital herpes, all of whom got either three vaccine shots or three placebo shots within a six-month period. They were followed for a total of 19 months.

The researchers discovered the vaccine didn't work well in women who had been infected by a related virus, the herpes simplex virus type 1, which is responsible for cold sores or fever blisters.

Only when women had never been exposed to type 1 or type 2 herpes did the effectiveness of the vaccine reach 74 percent.

Stanberry said even with those limitations and the lack of effectiveness in men, the vaccine could be a powerful weapon in the fight against herpes.

A new final-stage study of the vaccine is planned to be launched, that will involve 7,550 women aged 18 to 30 around the United States.

If the new tests bear out the existing study results, the vaccine could be available in about five years, said Lawrence Stanberry of the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, who led the study, published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

Other herpes vaccines are currently being investigated and it is felt that an effective vaccine may be available in 3-5 years. Vaccines will only function to prevent the infection in new patients. Those who already have the simplex virus disease will probably not gain any benefit. Other vaccines have been tried to prevent the HSV occurrence, but so far had no noticeable effects. These include the smallpox, Polio and Lupidon C vaccine.

8. Safe Sex with Herpes

The cold sore and genital herpes virus is extremely contagious and is generally spread by skin-to-skin contact. There is a risk of the virus spreading when the first signs of tingling or itching begin (prodrome), as well as when no sores or blisters are visible.

Some couples have reported no transmission of the virus even though they have been in a sexual relationship for many years. This is put down to restraint during outbreaks or very particular avoidance of the blisters during sex.

If you care about your partner and want to have an intimate relationship with her or him, herpes does not have to stand in the way. Couples deal successfully with herpes all the time. In most cases, it is only a minor inconvenience.

Herpes often brings about some changes in a couple's sex life, such as abstaining from sex during outbreaks. For most people with herpes, this occurs only a few times a year. Ask your partner how often he or she has outbreaks so you'll have some idea of what to expect.

Between outbreaks, you may wish to use condoms to reduce the risk of infection.

Condoms offer the best protection against other STDs and STIs as well, which is important in a new relationship. Since herpes does not pose a serious health risk, some couples choose not to use condoms in a long-term relationship.

Condoms should definitely be used if engaging in causal sex but they are not always 100% protection. Also, new wool condoms have a woven texture through which this incredibly small virus can migrate.

Facts about using condoms to prevent herpes transmission:

The herpes virus does not pass through latex condoms

When properly used latex condoms are likely to reduce your risk of spreading or getting herpes, however even the best condoms do not guarantee total safety.

When herpes sores occur in places not covered by a condom the condom is of little help, if any.

Condoms and foams should not be relied upon when herpes sores or symptoms are present.

Condoms do not provide 100 percent protection because a lesion may be found which the condom did not cover. Used consistently, however, condoms are one of the best available forms of prevention.

Herpes and your relationship

You and your partner will need to have open, honest communication about herpes so you can work together to prevent transmission. Your partner will need to feel comfortable telling you when he or she feels an outbreak coming on. Your relationship may benefit as you talk and establish trust.

On the other hand, if you aren't sure about the relationship, or you are uncomfortable with the risk, consider delaying intimacy for a while. Get to know your partner better, and give yourself time to adjust to the idea of herpes. There is no need to rush into a decision.

Keep in mind that all relationships face challenges, many far tougher than herpes. Good relationships stand or fall on far more important issues -- including communication, respect, and trust.

Safer Sex Practices:

Practice non-coital sex (sexual intimacy without penetration). Use your imagination, there are all kinds of ways to have fun! Just make sure to avoid touching or kissing the affected area when there is any sign of an outbreak (including itching or tingling).

Use barriers, male and/or female condoms (dental dams).

Chemoprophylaxis - use a lubricant with nonoxynol, proven to have some virucidal activity. Some people may be sensitive, causing them inflammation, rash or sores. In such cases it might increase likelihood of transmission - so definitely do not use in this case!

Use a lubricant. This will decrease friction and make the viral particles less likely to adhere to new locations.

Wash thoroughly afterwards (not the next morning), soap and water will help to remove the virus at the skin's surface, washing with diluted hydrogen peroxide or diluted chlorine bleach should also knock-out the virus.

Consume antivirals, suppressives and/or supplements and herbs. The availability of antigen specific transfer factor, immune support and other immuno-helpers like beta glucan ushers in a new age of prevention.

Be mindful of contact with the affected area to compromised skin such as cuts, abrasions and other skin conditions that could allow the virus to enter. The virus is more efficient at transmission if there is an opening in the skin.

Be very mindful and serious about prevention. Practice safer sex methods without exceptions - slipping up on your protocols just once could be a potential problem.

9. Genital Herpes Pictures

Penile Herpes



Image source : <http://www.ahmf.com.au/>



Perianal Herpes



Genital Herpes in a woman



Image source : <http://www.ahmf.com.au/>

Some of these pictures come from the Australian Herpes Management Forum

Herpes simplex affecting an infant's scrotum



Image source : DermNet <http://www.dermnet.org.nz/index.html>



Image source : DermNet <http://www.dermnet.org.nz/index.html>

Oral Herpes (Cold Sores) Pictures

Shown: lips (skin)



Image source: Prof. Dr. Fartasch, Dermatologische Universitätsklinik Erlangen;
supervision: Prof. Dr. Simon





Image Source : DermNet <http://www.dermnet.org.nz/index.html>



Image source : Afraid To Ask <http://www.afraidtoask.com/>

patient age: 54 years, patient sex: male



Patient: male, 24 y/o;



Image source: FotoArchive (selected by Dr. Bauer);
supervision: Prof. Dr. Simon





patient age: 15 years, patient sex: male



Patient: male, 29 y/o; Shown: head



Image source: Case reports (selected by Prof. Dr. Simon), Dermatologische Universitätsklinik Erlangen;
supervision: Prof. Dr. Simon

Female Herpes Pictures

patient age: 22 years, patient sex: female



Image source: Foto Archive (selected by Dr. Krejci-Papa), Dermatologische Universitätsklinik Erlangen;

supervision: Prof. Dr. Simon

University Erlangen, Department of Dermatology

Definition:

An itching polymorphous bullous eruption which occurs in pregnancy or the puerperium and which recurs in successive pregnancies.



Classical primary genital herpes affecting the vulva. This clinical picture is seen in a minority of cases. Pictures come from the Australian Herpes Management Forum <http://www.ahmf.com.au>

Definition:

Herpes simplex of the genitals.

Shown: vulva



Image source: Dr. Fartasch (Senior);

supervision: Prof. Dr. Simon

University Erlangen, Department of Dermatology



The Herpes Virus is also found in pregnancy and has been photographed for Prof. Dr. Simon



Image source : Afraid To Ask <http://www.afraidtoask.com>

Herpes Gestationis
Patient: female, 19 y/o;



University Erlangen, Department of Dermatology

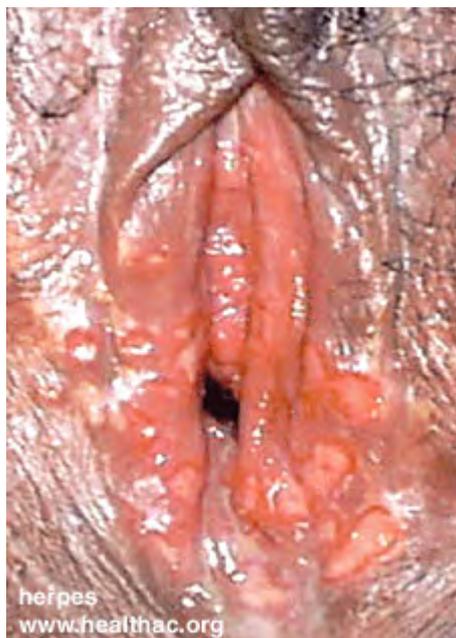


Image source: <http://www.healthac.org/images/herpes.html>

Male Herpes Pictures



Image source : Robert Taylor MD <http://www.healthac.org/images.html>



Image source : Afraid To Ask <http://www.afraidtoask.com/>

Definition:

Herpes simplex of the genitals.

Patient: male, 38 y/o; Shown: penis, foreskin, glans penis



Image source: Foto Archive (selected by Dr. Krejci-Papa), Dermatologische Universitätsklinik Erlangen;

supervision: PD Dr. Diepgen

Patient: male, 42 y/o; Shown: penis, inner aspect of the foreskin



Image source: FotoArchive (selected by Dr. Bauer);
supervision: Prof. Dr. Simon



Image source: FotoArchive (selected by Dr. Bauer);
supervision: Prof. Dr. Simon